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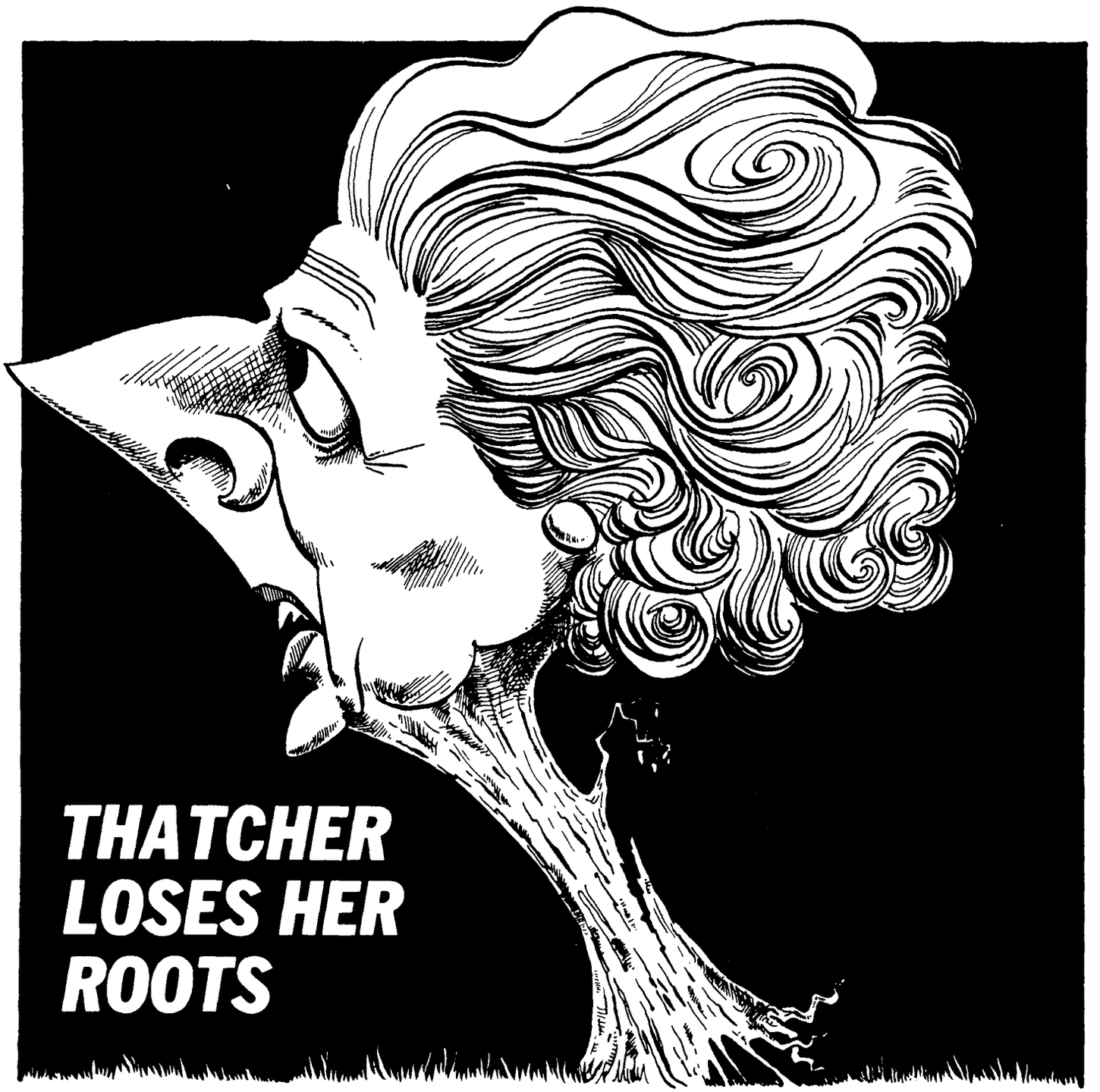

THATCHER LOSES HER ROOTS

FRANCIS WHEEN: The terrorising of the Beeb
MICHAEL SELWYN: Uganda's four kingdoms
BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE: Edward Bond at war

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New Statesman

Cover drawing: John Minnion

Thatcher loses her roots
Peter Riddell analyses why even the most revolting Tory MPs are revolting 8

NEWS 4-6

HOME

Patrick Wintour: Blaming 'rigid' labour markets 10
John Tanner: Oxfam's new director 12
Andrew Roth: Baroness Trumpington 12
Gordon Brown: Those shredded DHSS figures 14
Ian Williams: Prison drama 15

FOREIGN

Michael Selwyn: Uganda's four kingdoms 18
Moshin A. Bangash: Women oppressed in Pakistan 19
Phillip van Niekerk: South Africa's internal boycotts 20

WEEKEND

The priest and the middle classes: Part II of **Colm Toibin**'s stark account of torture in pre-Alfonsin Argentina 22

BOOKS

Fred Halliday: Revolution in the Far East 24
Mervyn Jones: Paul Johnson 25
Nigella Lawson: Feminist aesthetics 26
David Berry: Magazines now 26
Shorter reviews 27
Geoff Dyer: Pater Handke's and other new novels 28

ARTS

Stephanie Jordan: Dance 28
John Coleman: Films 29
Benedict Nightingale: Edward Bond 30
Andrew Clements: American music at the Proms 31

BACKCHAT

Andrew Rissik: Television 31
Nina Hibbin: Walkers' rest 32
Naseem Khan: Work in progress on Grand Union Orchestra 33
Weekend competition 34
Salamanca 34

PLUS

Mediawatch: Francis Wheen on the IRA and the BBC 16
Diary: Anne Smith 17
Roger Woddis 17
Letters 21
Slump 21

NEXT WEEK

David Edgar reviews Antony Sher's *Year of the King*
Julia Pascal: Survivors of Hiroshima & the Holocaust
Anthony Barnett: Labour's hollow message
Michael Rosen: Do buffaloes eat spaghetti?
Jules Lubbock: Building offices

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New Statesman

Vol 110 No 2837 2 August 1985

The BBC is now an arm of government

EXCEPT that there has been no loss of life, the governors of the BBC have dealt a harder blow to the British State this week than the Provisional IRA has achieved in 20 years. By banning the documentary which would have contained an interview with supposed IRA chief of staff Martin McGuinness, in response to an open Cabinet demand for censorship, the governors have told the world that the BBC *is* an arm of government — which was not true, though repeatedly alleged since Lord Reith's days.

It is now true, and it will continue to be so until this entire board of governors resigns. 'It is up to the governors to support their chief executive and his news people', said former BBC director general Sir Hugh Greene on *Channel 4*, and he is certainly right if the BBC's documentary and news programme makers are to have any public credibility, and any professional self-respect. The situation is that serious.

And yet it is more serious still. The degradation of the BBC and the humiliation of its staffs does not leave us without alternative news sources on television, radio or in the press. Viewers and listeners can apply Thatcher's own vaunted principles of market choice, and tune in elsewhere, until and unless this board of governors goes. A civil disobedience boycott of the BBC licence fee, which now becomes a levy on behalf of government policy, would equally be an application, if anyone cares to undertake it, of the Prime Minister's hostility to political levies without a ballot.

The damage unfortunately goes far beyond the BBC. Tuesday's all-day meeting of the BBC board of governors can scarcely have been unanimous throughout seven hours — why could it not *itself* have been televised live, revolving as it did round an issue fully as significant as any debated in the Lords? — but it has resulted in limitless damage to public confidence that the entire class of 'great and good' understands what is demanded of it in our famous unwritten constitution of checks and balances.

The overt pressure brought on the BBC via the Home Secretary's letter of 29 July to BBC chair Stuart Young — but stemming, as she made clear in her Tuesday night interview on *Newsnight*, from the Prime Minister herself — betrayed this government's failure to grasp the most crucial of constitutional truths: that government itself can be, and certainly tends towards being, a 'destabilising' force. For this very reason it is hedged about by Commons, judiciary, unions, rights of assembly, and unsubservient media. This truth is the very one recognised by parties which have a policy of radical change and therefore want to be in government in order to 'destabilise' the status quo. Thatcher's however is a government which expressly argues for Conservative constitutionalism and for *weakening* the power of the State over the civil organisations of, say, private enterprise and the media.

It is now not going too far, even while giving all due weight to differences between blood shed and words shed, to categorise Margaret Thatcher's soaring concept of 'leadership' as a destabilisation of Britain from within through the unharnessed assertion of governmental power. She seeks to blind us to the damage she does to democracy by evoking the omnipotent threat of the enemy without — terrorism — and in that name she, and the governers of our public broadcasting system, do immeasurably

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greater damage to democracy from within. Her own party is silenced, a Public Order Act is on the way, Ministers freely breach *sub judice* understandings, there are open suggestions that we may withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights next year, and now the world's pioneer independent broadcasting network is forced to take orders — to the demoralisation of attempts towards free airwaves around the world.

Last year on ITV — the 'Independent' now takes on a wholly unexpected significance — Mary Holland freely and fully interviewed Martin McGuinness *(see page 16)*. Mrs Thatcher has gone for the BBC because, to her, it is 'public sector', her domain; and probably because with her lust for the jugular she intuitively senses that it is weak. The governors have supinely bared the throat. □

Sanctions myths

THE UNILATERAL French action against South Africa last week transforms the debate over sanctions. Prime minister Laurent Fabius' announcement that France is recalling its ambassador to South Africa, banning new investment and seeking the support of the UN Security Council for voluntary measures against the apartheid regime frees the paralysis which has gripped Western thinking about sanctions since the end of those against Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, in 1979. The French action emphasises that 'sanctions' can include different measures which can be applied selectively where they will have most political or economic impact.

It would be unrealistic to expect the present British Cabinet to impose full economic sanctions, but there are many selective measures even this government could take. The Exchange Control Act 1947 could be amended to prohibit new investment in South Africa. Government credit guarantees for exports to South Africa could be ended. The 'no visa' visiting arrangement for Britons can be ended at the Home Secretary's discretion. British nationals, until recently emigrating to South Africa at the rate of about 10,000 a year, could be officially discouraged from doing so. All forms of nuclear collaboration could be ended. And if Britain applied a trade embargo in just one sector — electronics — it would have a disproportionate effect on the South African economy.

Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe has used arguments against doing any of this which do little for his reputation. We are told that sanctions wouldn't work, because Rhodesian sanctions didn't. Rhodesia, of course, had a powerful sanctions-busting neighbour — South Africa — to the south. But to argue that if white Rhodesia had had international recognition and free access to finance, arms and fuel, the history of the Zimbabwean struggle would not have been different is nonsense.

Not only would sanctions not work, but black South Africans would suffer, according to Sir Geoffrey. He quoted in his support veteran white anti-apatheid campaigner Helen Suzman and black leader Gatsha Buthelezi. He quoted these two people because there is almost nobody else. He did not quote Bishop Tutu, the South African Council of Churches, the United Democratic Front or any independent black unions.

Sanctions *would* cause hardship for blacks, but they are suffering already and their leaders have appealed to those outside South Africa to do everything in their power to bring that suffering to a quicker end. There is only one argument against sanctions which should be taken seriously: the effect they would have on South Africa's neighbours. South African president P.W. Botha showed how worried he was by the prospect of sanctions when he threatened this week to deport 1.5 million blacks to neighbouring states if those states continued to call for sanctions. If sanctions were imposed, South Africa has the power seriously to damage its neighbours economically in retaliation. But this is international terrorism. Mrs Thatcher should not give in to it. □

Rock Hudson's gift

THE CANDYFLOSS career of Rock Hudson may yet end in a great service to the Republic. The disclosure that the 59 year old movie star was diagnosed as having AIDS a year ago has forced out into the main media of America those stories of Hudson's homosexuality which have never been a secret within the narrower film world. An overdue lesson is being taught to an American public led by an actor-President: that the enacted is not reality; that the actor may not be the act. The appalling commercial success of Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo*, the flag-waving post-Vietnam war fantasy which is making a 'hero' of an actor who never fought in Vietnam (any more than John Wayne fought a war), indicates how serious the confusion between the imaged and the real is becoming in the American body politic.

It can be difficult in Europe to grasp how vast a store the United States sets by its perception of Hollywood acts as embodied American truths. Only this week the European edition of *Time*, datelined 29 July, carried a publicity still of Rock Hudson in a 1985 film-lot reunion with his 1950s co-star Doris Day. The 'image' of the all-American 6ft 4in heterosexual role-model was relentlessly being purveyed even as the tale of Hudson's sickness broke too late for *Time*'s editors to change the edition. The 'discovery' of Rock Hudson's homosexuality has been astounding millions of Americans who had been offered his reassuring 'heterosexual' presence for over a quarter of a century. From Elizabeth Taylor to Ronald Reagan the American establishment is sending messages of support to the actor in his physical and mental distress. Gays hope that Rock Hudson is now breaking one of Hollywood's fiercest moulds. The whole world can hope that American credulity in image-manufacture has taken a dent. □

WOULD 300,000 HAVE DIED HAD THE JAPANESE HAD THE BOMB ?

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B & B LUNACY SOARS IN EAST LONDON BOROUGH

John Cogill

Asian families — latest recipients of Costa del Dole luxury

DUMPING THE HOMELESS has taken on a new meaning in the London borough of Tower Hamlets — anywhere, anyhow will do. The East London council is scattering families as far afield as Heston in West London, near Heathrow Airport and Southend on Sea, a spread of 60 miles. CHRISTIAN WOLMAR reports

THIS WEEK'S *Yorkshire TV* documentary showed that one landlord alone, Aristophanes Thrasyvoulou, will get £1.6 million this year for bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation from Tower Hamlets and in one hotel 70 people share a small cooker.

Now, further research has revealed that the council has placed 19 Asian families in hotels in Southend since May, using an agency run by David Poulten, who left employment with Southend council housing department in November 1984.

In the *Mirror* the previous March Paul Foot had run a story about Poulten's ability to obtain better council accommodation for those to whom he was close. Now, with a local property owner, Martin Pharoah, he runs Merendase Property Services which has approached London councils who use B&B for their homeless families. Tower Hamlets, whose homeless persons unit is 25 per cent below its establishment level, has found it easier to send people to Southend into Merendase properties at £6 per night per person rather than use London accommodation.

Sending Bengali families to Southend sentences them to a seaside nightmare. There is virtually no black community, only one very expensive halal butchers — but there is a National Front presence which may well be stirred into action by the publication, last Friday, of the names of the streets where the Asians are staying.

With the train fare at £4 return for the 40 miles journey back to their Spitalfields community in East London, and the DHSS showing a degree of intransigence remarkable even for them in their dealings with the Asians, their isolation is virtually complete.

Mad 'general post'

In a bizarre twist to the Costa del Dole publicity which led to the changes in April to the DHSS regulations for single homeless people living in B&B, the Asians are moving into accommodation vacated as a *result* of the changes. An estimated 1,500 people were affected in Southend, which because of the availability of hotels had been a magnet to them. Now, thanks to Merendase, the hotels are filling up again.

The use of Southend hotels is just the latest scandal in the borough's treatment of its homeless families. A year ago, it started using the Thorncliffe Hotel near Heathrow, 20 miles from the borough. Although most of the families are newly arrived women and children joining their long-settled menfolk, no social workers visit the hotel, as they are outside the borough boundary.

More recently, the council has started using houses owned by Antonio Kyprianou which make no pretence of ever having been a hotel. Yet he charges £6.50 per person a night — in one 13 room house in Belmont Road, South Tottenham, there are 45 people with up to four children in one bed and a family of five in a room with no window.

Haringey Council, in whose area three of Kyprianou's four houses are located, is taking action against them to restrict the numbers but a spokeswoman admitted that 'it would take months to enforce'.

Tower Hamlets now has 418 families in B&B and expects to spend £5.6 million on them this year, almost double last year's total. Yet, the local Tower Hamlets Families Committee reckons that a programme of crash repairs to bring down the 7.7 per cent vacancy rate amongst the borough's housing stock (third highest in the country) is both feasible and affordable and would result in getting the families out of B&B within months.

'The money is there, the housing is there but the political will isn't' says Richard Backes of the campaign. ●

BBC panics on *Open Space*

THE *OPEN SPACE* documentary on Northern Ireland due to be broadcast 14 August, and abruptly dropped this week as part of the larger uproar over the interview with Martin McGuinness, contained *no* interviews with the Provisional IRA.

The programme in question, on 'supergrasses' and their corrupting effect on Northern Irish justice, was due to be transmitted in the *Open Space* slot on 14 August and was to be followed by a 15-minute studio discussion. The official reason given for the 'postponement' is that 'the programme is not finished yet'.

Other sources describe this excuse as 'absolute rubbish', claiming that the programme was stopped because, as a result of the McGuinness case, the BBC is now unwilling to show anything on Northern Ireland that might seem remotely critical of the government.

The *Open Space* programme would have been particularly embarrassing for the government, since it shows how Protestant and Catholic women have come together in a common hostility to the supergrass system. One of the Republican women interviewed in the programme, Catherine Moore, tells of how she was arrested in 1982 on the word of a supergrass and was held in Armagh jail for two and a half years before being acquitted. A Protestant interviewee, Caroline Newell, describes how her husband was charged with conspiracy to murder on the word of a supergrass, but was then acquitted when the supergrass retracted his evidence.

Another aspect of the programme which might have caused slight embarrassment for Thatcher was the use of some powerful drawings of 'mass show trials' in Northern Ireland by Linda Kitson — best known as the official war artist chosen by the Ministry of Defence to cover the Falklands conflict.

Francis Wheen

Want a change from MORI. . .?

THIS is the opinion poll that counts. No problems with sampling errors or loaded questions. If money talks, then the bookmakers listen. We asked two to quote odds on which party will win the most seats at the next General Election. We turned these into percentages (*eg evens = 50 per cent*), rounded them down to add up to 100 per cent and took the average.

We also did it just before the Brecon and Radnor by-election so that we could keep track of any changes. William Hill interpreted Brecon as good news for the Liberal/SDP Alliance, shortening the Alliance odds quite dramatically from 8-1 to 5-1, but leaving its odds for the main parties unchanged. Ladbroke interpreted Brecon as good news for Labour, bringing Labour into the 'lead' over the Tories and dropping the Alliance from 9-2 to 5-1. (For those unfamiliar with odds, the bigger the first number in relation to the second, the more money you win, because the bookie thinks that party/horse/dog is less likely to win.)

Michael Raper of William Hill says he isn't expecting any dramatic change unless. . .unless Mrs Thatcher resigned?. . .'unless someone comes along with a huge amount of money'.

Bookies' poll	Score	Change on month	Best odds
Con	43%	-6½%	5-4 Ladbroke
Lab	42%	+4½%	5-4 Wm Hill
Lib/SDP	15%	+2%	5-1 either

The 'score' is the percentage 'probability' of each party winning the greatest number of seats at the next General Election, based on the odds quoted by Ladbroke and William Hill. The bookmaker quoting the best odds for someone wanting to bet on each party appears in the last column. We couldn't quite grasp Coral's system in making a book on electoral possibilities in time for this issue — but may be able to incorporate them next time.

John Rentoul

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Rates anguish of the great cities

NOW EDINBURGH STEPS BACK FROM THE BRINK

LABOUR controlled Edinburgh district council's spending battle with the government looks as if it could soon all be over bar the shouting — at least for this year. Labour councillors have decided to step back from a confrontation with the law and to cut the council's rate by 'creative accountancy' rather than risking disqualification and surcharges. ROB EDWARDS reports

LABOUR councillors decided unanimously at a meeting on Tuesday night 30 July to 'reduce the rate by a specific amount equivalent to the administrative options available and any capital receipts which can be identified.' They also committed themselves to protecting the major improvement in jobs and services so far achieved.

Labour councillors will decide on what level of rate reduction to offer to Scottish Secretary George Younger this Thursday 1 August prior to a full council meeting. They're likely to agree a reduction somewhat less than the 5.2p demanded by the Secretary of State in the hope that he might be persuaded to meet them part way — which may seem unlikely, but it's possible. Ministers haven't set a bottom line, and are now said within the Scottish Office to be taking a 'reasonably benign' attitude to Edinburgh.

The decision to reduce the rate on the general service budget follows an earlier decision to comply with a Court Order to cut the housing budget. At a meeting prior to a specially convened full council meeting on Sunday 21 July, the Labour group voted 22 to 10 in favour of a series of 'administrative procedures' which enabled the council to comply with the Court Order without cutting its housing budget.

Major tactical shift

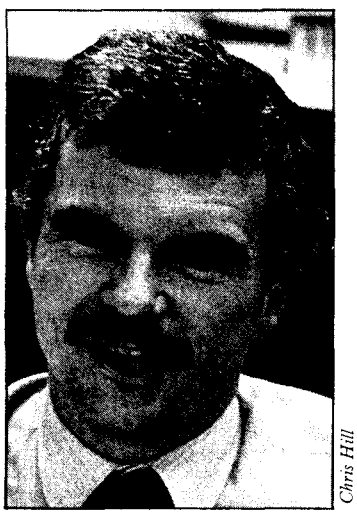
That decision marked a major change in the tactics of the Left in Edinburgh and represented a severe rebuff for the group's leadership. Group leader Alex Wood and secretary Jimmy Burnett regarded it as an important defeat for their law-defying strategy.

But other councillors and activists on the Left, including most of the committee chairpersons, saw no point in political martyrdom, preferring to take practical steps which would protect the real gains already made.

In some respects the disagreement within Edinburgh's Labour group mirrors the kind of divisions that emerged when the Greater London Council fixed a rate — with one crucial difference. So far in Edinburgh, to the credit of all, none of the internal arguments have been conducted in public.

'Creative' wording

At a meeting of district party members on Monday this week (29 July) Wood and Burnett were able to



Chris Hill

Leader Alex Wood: 'crisis next year'

regain some of the initiative by winning almost unanimous support for a cleverly worded motion that restricted councillors' creative accountancy options. But, as they recognised, the whole tenor of the argument has changed: before, compliance was unthinkable, now it is on the cards.

Although Edinburgh's problems may be over for this year, next year is another matter. Most creative accountancy techniques can only be used once.

In 1986 the council will face, in Alex Wood's words, 'a crisis of gigantic proportions'. Solving such a crisis will, no doubt, require that all this year's tactical arguments be re-run. ●

Reprieve

THANKS to the media attention paid to the case, the Home Office has relented and rescinded the removal orders on Rose Alaso and her seven year old son Brian (NS 12 July). *Removal to Uganda seemed to threaten certain death for them — none of the family survived the Amin and Obote regimes. The last minute reprieve was announced before the coup, which would have made removal to Uganda well nigh possible anyway. A judicial review on the case is to be held in a week's time.* ●

MISCELLANY

The ugly face of . . .

Here's how the other 0.00001 per cent lives. When one of the Vestey directors at the group HQ in Smithfield wants to summon his own personal assistant from the pool of them in an oak-panelled room, a strange creaking sound is first heard.

An oak panel lifts up. A picture of the appropriate summoning director shoots out. The wretched assistant knows it's his master's phiz, and obeys the summons. The very rich, said Scott Fitzgerald sagely, are different from you and me.

When words fail us

Indeed they are. There exists a man who, from the safety of a B-29 alongside the Enola Gay, *watched the bomb drop on 6 August 1945, and yet who during this commemorative period is struggling to profit personally from possession of the 16-mm colour cassette of aerial photographs of Hiroshima's destruction — those same pictures we are seeing again this week, and have been seeing all our lives. He is Harold M Agnew, now 64, president of the $160 million annual turnover G A Technologies, of La Jolla, California. The tale isn't our discovery: it's told in* Time *magazine. J Robert Oppenheimer gave the originals of the photographs to Agnew, who'd been on* Great Artiste, *the instrument plane which measured the blast, flying a quarter of a mile from* Enola Gay*'s wing tips. Agnew is 'steaming over the IRS' (USA's Inland Revenue Service) which is refusing to give him deductions on his income taxes if he hands the film over to Stanford University's Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, & Peace. He had the photographs appraised by Sotheby's in his current efforts to become better off from 113,000 known deaths.*

What First Amendment?

A journalist who's been exposing US dirty dealings over British computer exports found himself kept out on the doorstep of the American embassy when he went there for a press briefing last week. Kevin Cahill, a freelance for the *Sunday Times*, went along to ask about the way that US domination of COCOM — the 'Coordinating Committee' of Western countries which controls the export of 'sensitive' goods to Eastern bloc countries — has effectively imposed US controls on British computer companies. The Americans are demanding that British hi-tech goods that contain only minor US components have to have export licences from the American commercial authorities. This 'extra-territoriality' has been condemned by politicians from all parties, and two weeks ago the (British) Attorney General came close to calling it illegal. Cahill was one of the first journalists to expose all this, and has been feeding Liberal MP Paddy Ashdown with embarrassing Parliamentary Questions. He's also been monitoring CIA involvement with British trade. When he arrived at the embassy he was told he couldn't come in because he wasn't invited — true, but other uninvited journalists were admitted. The embassy then claimed that he might 'make a speech', although Cahill usually keeps quiet at press conferences. Journalists from other papers protested at the exclusion of a colleague. But the *Sunday Times*, which has a policy of supporting the US in trade matters, tells the *NS* that as Cahill's a freelance, 'it's a matter for him and the embassy to sort out'. And it has dropped Cahill's story three weeks running.

Reporter's notebook

'While we were walking along the interchange between Bank and Monument I felt as if someone were trying to push me over' (this is 6.30 pm last Sunday evening). 'I thought it was a mistake but it happened three or four times. I looked behind, and saw a very strong-looking, tall man, who was doing it to me. He looked like a trained fighter. We ignored him and kept on walking. When we reached the District line platform the man came up to us, touched me on the shoulder, and said "Hey, I'm National Front". I didn't pay any heed but he came again, and this time said it to the friend who was with me — a woman — who told him to get lost. This infuriated him. He started abusing us. He said we'd have to have "a sparring match" with him: "come on, let's go out of the tube station and fight it out. You two and me alone". Then he went back to another tough-looking man on the platform, talked to him for a few moments, and said "You'll have to come out to fight, I won't let you go like this". There were many people around, he didn't seem bothered by their presence, he didn't seem to be drunk or under the influence of any drug. A train came. We escaped.' The narrator? A *New Statesman* reporter. Anwar Iqbal, on his way to Sunday's public meeting about the Ilford fire. See his account overleaf, page 6.

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Peace Protests Roll Call 17

Total arrested to date in UK and Eire: 7641

Arrests to date by location

Faslane Peace Camp, near Helensburgh, Scotland — **2**

23.6.85. Seven Faslane peace campers followed a damaged Mammoth Major carrier (part of a convoy transporting warheads from Polaris submarines) which had been involved in a crash in the centre of Helensburgh on 20 June. The seven were stopped at Rhu at 8am on Sunday morning by a police roadblock and asked by police to give their names. As soon as William Peden gave his name he was arrested. Another Faslane camper was arrested for voicing his suspicion that it was a 'fake road traffic check'. Both were charged with br. of the peace. They are complaining to the police about these charges and also to the SCCL. Police also damaged their cameras when trying to remove film taken of the incident. The damaged carrier which MoD police in Scotland maintain only suffered a cracked windscreen in the accident on 20 June was *towed* all the way back the Burghfield where it was photographed by Cruisewatch members.

Cruisewatch manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain

Sculthorpe USAF base, Norfolk — **73**

8.6.85. 73 people arrested taking part in the 5th stage of the snowball (fence cutting) campaign. Some charges may have been dropped, 7 people have elected to be tried at Crown Court — committals in July — magistrates court trials start September. Summary of snowball cases so far: out of 105 defendants of the 4 stages of Snowball so far completed there were 6 charges w/drawn, 5 cases dismissed, 1 community service, 5 asked to accept bind over to keep peace — 2 of whom refused and were sent to prison for 21 days. Total fines imposed £5,160, plus £1,820 court costs and £956.85 compensation. 93 different people have taken part, 9 taking part twice and 2 taking part 3 times. Many thanks to Angie Zelter for her hard work in keeping such thorough records!

Mildenhall USAF Base, Suffolk — **2**

8.6.85. 2 people arrested and charged with Cr. damage after taking part in snowball campaign.

Molesworth USAF base, Huntingdonshire — **19**

8.6.85. 19 people arrested after taking part in snowball campaign and cutting the fence at Peace corner.

Greenham Common USAF base, Berkshire

19 June at Newbury Court. 45 women appeared to plead for the 25 May trespass action. 17 did not turn up, 7 cases were withdrawn (as they were originally booked for a Sunday — MoD blunder!), 9 pleaded not guilty and these were adjourned for trial in August, 12 pleaded guilty and of these 4 (say) they will pay fines, 7 were given 5 days and 1 given 14 days. Fri 21 June at Newbury Court. 12 women who 'decorated' the MoD's self-propelling gun in May have pleaded not guilty and their case is adjourned until 30 Sept.
From 16 July Newbury Court is 'booked' solid for 6 weeks with Greenham trespass cases dating from 1 April.

Alconbury USAF base, Nr. Huntingdon

Outcome of the Alconbury 9 'conspiracy to commit criminal damage' trial: Phil Hudson and Paul Rudolph 1 yr in prison suspended for 2 yrs bound over in the sum of £350 each for 2 yrs and £500 each fine; Sybilla Snake 200 hrs community service bound over in sum of £300 for 2 yrs; Roger Oakley and Paul Briggs 170 and 150 hrs comm. service respectively and bound over in the sum of £250 for 2 yrs; Corrie McQuaith was acquitted and prosecution dropped charges against Veronica McGuire and asked that the case be kept on file at a retrial on 17 July — jury had failed earlier to arrive at a verdict in her case.

Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research Establishment

25.6.85. The 5 Greenham women arrested and charged with cr. damage last June (2 charges each of cr. damage to two perimeter fences) were found guilty at Reading Crown Court on 25 June and each given a 2 yr. conditional discharge plus £30 comp. to MoD and between £50/£100 pros. costs according to earnings.

Please send new information to ***Janey Hulme*** *at the* New Statesman.

The Peacemakers Relief Society, c/o 6 Endsleigh St, London WC1, welcomes applications for money to pay for hardships incurred by those doing peace work (this does not include payment of fines).

NO LIGHT YET ON WAVE OF ASIAN FIRE DEATHS

NEARLY three weeks after the burning alive of Shamira Kasim and her three children in Ilford, London, (*NS* 19 July) the cause of the tragedy remains unresolved. Local black activists are convinced that the murder was the work of racists but police say only that 'racial motivation is one possibility.' ANWAR IQBAL reports

THE POLICE have come across new evidence alleging that four men were seen 'cruising around the house' in a red Cavalier car on the night it was set ablaze. Asians living in the area insist that the four men were whites, but police aren't willing to disclose their colour, confirming only that they weren't Asians.

Dr Zafar Malik, president of the Pakistan Welfare Society, says that two white youths passing through the street that night observed the red car near the Kasim house; and that the two youths stopped and tried to help the Kasim family when they saw the fire. One of them was even injured in doing so.

Due to police unwillingness to lay the blame for the Kasim deaths categorically on racism, the Asian community is extremely dissatisfied with progress made on the case. A joint meeting in Ilford earlier this week formed a working committee comprising local politicians, community workers and representatives of other communities to put pressure on the police.

Presumptive racism

The community wants the police to treat this case 'as racially motivated unless proved otherwise,' G.R. Malik of the Muslim Welfare Association, Ilford, tells the *New Statesman*: 'The Asians feel very insecure and unprotected as the police have never done enough to protect them.'

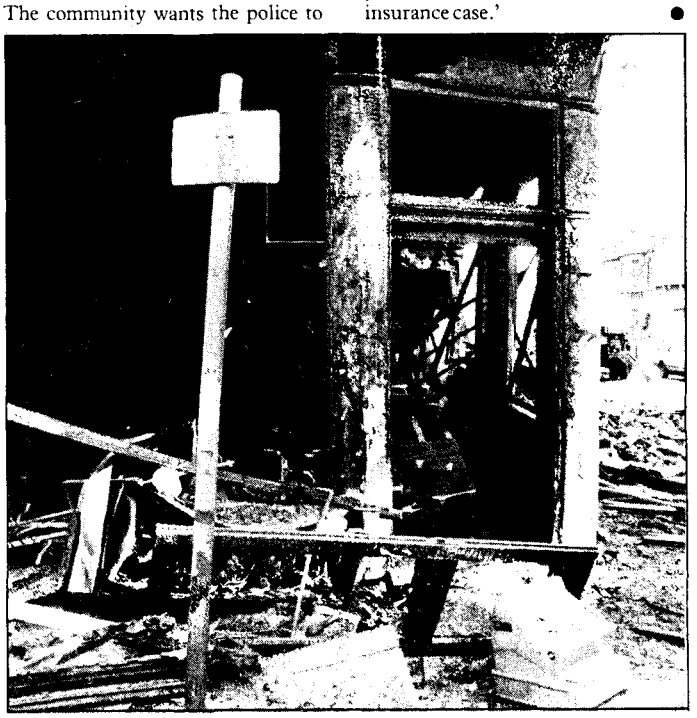
But in a statement this weekend (27-28 July) police appealed to Asians 'not to harbour any suspicions against us as we are as keen to arrest those responsible as the Asians, if not more so.'

Dr Malik recalls more than 20 arson attacks in the Walthamstow and Leytonstone districts alone during the last few years: 'the police have not been able to put an end to this wave of racist terror. How can they, when they don't even recognise racism as the root-cause?

'In 1979 Mukhtar Ahmed, of Falmer Road E10, was burnt alive in an arson attack. We had evidence that it was a work of the racists but police arrested Mukhtar's son. The case was later thrown out of the court on first hearing.'

Meanwhile, another London man was killed in a fire on Saturday afternoon, 28 July. David Singh, 23, of Longhurst House, on the Mozart Estate in West London, was found on the 3rd floor of a 4-story block of Novello Flats, on the same estate. The house caught fire after an explosion and the police are treating it as 'suspicious'. However, they refused to discuss the ethnic origin of the deceased.

In another incident on Saturday the 'Islamabad' Halal butcher's shop in East London (*see picture*) was completely gutted after being set on fire. Asian community workers are treating it as an arson attack but police are telling them it was 'an insurance case.' ●



Andrew Pothecary

Halal butcher's gutted by fire: 'nothing to do with race', either

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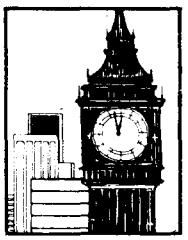

HUGH STEPHENSON

Captain Maxwell just keeps bouncing along

HAVING COME off my motor-cycle, and as a result having spent some time in hospital mending, I missed the excitement of a despatch rider dashing a week or so ago to 14 Farringdon Lane with a package addressed to me personally and marked URGENT from Mr Robert Maxwell.

The vital package turned out to contain not one but two copies of the *Selected Speeches of General Jaruzelski*, published together with a sycophantic biographical sketch and an even more sycophantic interview with the great man by Robert Maxwell, published by Maxwell's Pergamon Press. It is a most revealing publication — about Robert Maxwell, if not about the Polish Prime Minister.

For a start the Jaruzelski-Maxwell *tête-a-tête* is billed as 'the first major interview given to a Western journalist by the controversial General'. Now Captain Bob in his time has played many parts, but until now I for one did not realise that he thought of himself as being a mere working hack as well.

If he is a journalist at all, he is not a very well trained one, for if the edited version of his interview with the General is an accurate reflection of what happened, for long periods Captain Bob did most of the talking. The text is also full of Maxwellisms such as: 'May I say how grateful I am for that profound and very interesting commentary on the economic reform and Poland's economic problems' — which sound less like a journalist exploiting an exclusive interview to the full and more like a salesman with his foot in the door.

This impression is strengthened later in the interview when Captain Bob tells the General that in his view Poland's economic problems could be much eased if he were to use Western economic and industrial consultants — 'it costs next to nothing, but brings huge benefits' — and reveals that, as it happens, he himself is the saviour of the British printing industry, is already a consultant to the Bulgarian Government in modernising their printing industry and has also been approached by the Soviet Commission for Scientific and Technical Progress.

The General himself reveals an attractive shaft of ironic humour that passes entirely unnoticed by Captain Bob. 'Yes, I have heard you are an eminent economic specialist, hence the humility which I feel as a self-taught man in this field.'

For the record, the Maxwell recipe for the Polish economy was 'firmness and even brutality by the government', with 'the example of closing down a company' as being the best way to achieve 'more rapid progress in profitability and production' and a measured dose of unemployment being required to improve Polish labour mobility. Also for the record the humble and self-taught Polish Prime Minister smartly rejected this neo-Thatcherite advice with arguments that would have pleased the late J. M. Keynes.

WHY, YOU may ask, devote so much space to the self-important outpourings of Robert Maxwell? It is known that he has an ego of monstrous proportions and phenomenal energy to match it. It's a pity that under his erratic direction *The Mirror*'s downward slide has accelerated. But why mock a chap who is only scouting for business in Eastern Europe, and anywhere else that he can find it?

The answer lies in the words with which General Garuzelski greeted his interviewer: 'I have heard much about you, as a well-known politician, an influential member of the Labour Party and an eminent publisher.' Five years — even one year — ago, those words would just have caused wry amusement to those who have followed the career of Robert Maxwell over the years. Today, though, he has built up a position in the communications industry which makes him a far more serious proposition than ever he was back in 1971, when two inspectors appointed by the Board of Trade — Mr Owen Staple, Q.C., and Sir Ronald Leach — examined the affairs of the old Pergamon Press — and reached their now celebrated conclusion:

> We regret having to conclude that, notwithstanding Mr Maxwell's acknowledged abilities and energy, he is not in our opinion a person who can be relied on to exercise proper stewardship of a publicly quoted company.

Maxwell has always contended that he was not given a chance to answer the charges against him made in the report before it was published, that the Inspectors behaved in the manner of Star Chamber, that he had been denied natural justice and that Stable and Leach were just representatives of the Establishment closing ranks against an outsider when they declared that

> he had a reckless and unjustified optimism which enabled him on some occasions to disregard unpalatable facts and on others to state what he must have known was untrue.

Be that as it may, the fact today is that it is even more difficult to see what Maxwell is up to. He clearly found the disclosure requirements of the Companies Acts irksome for Pergamon as a British public company. Today the Maxwell interests in the Mirror Group, in the reborn Pergamon companies, in Central Television (what on earth was the IBA doing letting him in there?), in cable and in satellite all hide behind a Liechtenstein family trust.

So much for Maxwell the communications tycoon. What about Maxwell 'the well-known politician and influential member of the Labour Party'? Well, all and sundry are denying the scurrilous rumour that he has been financing Neil Kinnock's foreign travel, which is a good thing because taking people's money on whatever terms can create a sense of obligation. But there was the odd affair of that last list of working Labour peers.

It included three names of people all of whom are more or less closely connected with Robert Maxwell in business. Bernard Donoughue, former political adviser to Wilson and Callaghan and now a stockbroker, is widely credited with having brought Maxwell business to his firm, Grieveson Grant. Sam Silkin, the former Attorney General, now seems to spend most of his time helping Maxwell in one way or another, as his deputy chairman or alternate director or legal adviser. And Charles Williams, the former chairman of the Price Commission, since May when he was eased out as managing director of merchant bankers Henry Ansbacher has been Financial Adviser to the Mirror Group and to Maxwell personally.

When Ansbachers banking group underwent a financial rescue and reconstruction in June the new board's report to shareholders said that the disastrous 1984-5 financial performance was the result of 'over-ambitious expansion beyond the management and financial resources available to the group, compounded by the absence of adequate cost and operational controls'. Worse, a committee of two directors who were not on the board at the time have come to the conclusion that during 1984 the bank paid a dividend on estimated profits which turned out to be losses, that material facts were not presented to the board and that there were no adequate reserves to cover the payment.

Lord Williams has complained that he was not given any chance to answer the charges made against his stewardship before the report was published. It is to be hoped that he will take the earliest opportunity to do so, because being responsible for the improper payment of a dividend is a serious offence under the Companies Acts. He owes it to himself, to his new employers and to his new colleagues in the House of Lords to set the record straight.

The political point here is not that Robert Maxwell and his circle are wildly different from much else that goes on in and around the City. But it is odd to find such a little group once again nudging into positions of influence near the top of the Labour Party.

Why are senior Labour politicians so often so naive about money? It always comes to tears in the end. □

Peter Kellner is on holiday.

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TORY WILL FRAYS AWAY

Until recently, the 'wets' were isolated dissidents. But now they have been joined by Mrs Thatcher's 'own' team from the seaside, suburbs and shires. PETER RIDDELL looks at where it all might lead

MARGARET THATCHER had an uncomfortable 90 minutes in the House of Commons in the early hours of 24 July. For almost the first time her administration was being criticised not just by the 'wets' but by her natural allies and supporters. Her own people, 'one of us', were in revolt. And she did not like it.

While many backbenchers who share Mrs Thatcher's poujadist instincts dislike high pay for state officials on principle as well as for tactical reasons, the backbench rebellion was only partly about the top salaries' awards. As one of the more Baldwin-like members of the Cabinet has remarked, it was a lightning conductor for the pent-up frustrations of the previous months.

That was before the embarrassing defeat for the government by the House of Lords on Monday evening on a Labour amendment regretting the 'insensitivity' of the decision. This principally showed how the present administration has alienated the centrist position.

The Commons revolt the week before was a warning of widespread concern over the behaviour and attitudes of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister herself, their style of decision-making and the direction of Government strategy. However, it did not, as some fevered MPs and pundits have suggested, mark a watershed or bear comparison with the Norway debate of 1940 which triggered the fall of the Chamberlain Government.

Nevertheless, the rebellion was the largest of Mrs Thatcher's premiership. The usual government majority of more than 140 was cut to 17 despite all the supplications of the Tory whips — appeals to loyalty and hints of a reshuffle in the offing. Nearly half the government's support came from the massive 'payroll vote' of ministers, whips and parliamentary private secretaries (the latter now a record 50). Only just over a half of all Conservative backbench MPs backed the Government.

As significant was the identity of the rebels. Some 29 of the 48 who voted against were first elected to the Commons in 1983 and several have highly marginal seats. The rebels included some of the hard-core 'wets' like Robert Hicks and David Knox but more striking was the presence of MPs like Terry Dicks, Peter Bruinvels, Derek Conway, David Amess, Roger King, and Peter Hubbard-Miles (see opposite) who come from the populist ex-local councillor and small businessman group who are normally counted among Mrs Thatcher's most fervent supporters.

The mood was caught by Tony Beaumont-Dark, a Birmingham stockbroker who makes no apology for having his finger on the popular pulse. He said during the debate: 'We should be sensitive to people who bother to ring us. We should be sensitive also to the feelings of those who have been loyal to one's party for 30 or 40 years who speak not from a sense of outrage but from genuine sadness because a party which they thought was on the right lines suddenly does something which, according to a natural sense of justice, seems to be wrong.'

It was in many ways a revolt of court versus country, or rather of suburb and seaside versus Whitehall. A senior rebel remarked that, like Edward Heath in 1972-73, Mrs Thatcher seemed to have more regard for her permanent secretaries (all now picked by her) than for her own MPs. Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong is fortunate that he cannot suffer the same fate as Charles the First's chief adviser, the Earl of Strafford. He favoured the royal prerogative and was executed after being impeached by Parliament at the instigation of a certain awkward backbencher, Mr Pym (the current one's direct ancestor).

THE TOP salaries row brought to a head a feeling that the Government was getting out of touch. Words like insensitivity, arrogance, humility and justice cropped up again and again in the comments of MPs. Before then there had been a series of revolts or protests over EEC finances, local government reorganisation and finance, water charges and the Stansted airport development. This was apart from disquiet over the handling of the teachers' dispute, planning policy and the threat to the Green Belt.

'We should be sensitive to people who bother to ring us. We should be sensitive also to the feelings of those who have been loyal to one's party for 30 or 40 years'

Tony Beaumont-Dark

All these individual revolts could be safely neutralised by Chief Whip John Wakeham. There were few links between them and certainly no common organisation. Only 20 to 25 MPs, including hard-core ex-ministerial 'wets', are persistent rebels.

Similarly, the much-trumpeted launch of the Conservative Centre Forward group has made little impact at Westminster, and probably even less outside. By the very act of raising the flag of open dissent the 30 or so backbenchers ensured that they would remain isolated, and thus largely ineffective. For the advocates of traditional Toryism violated the first Tory principle of unity and loyalty to the tribal leader. Francis Pym, Sir Ian Gilmour and co. are always worth listening to but they have not yet won converts. In an eve-of-recess statement the group claimed that the government had moved in its direction over Wages Councils and the ending of local expenditure targets, but in both cases it would have done so anyway. And since the very public row at the launch, the group has preferred to work behind the scenes with private talks with Ministers.

WHAT MATTERS is the stirring of the loyalists. The local results, particularly in safe shire and seaside seats, came as a shock, as did the sharp drop in the Conservative Party's opinion poll rating in the late spring. It was no longer possible for Tory MPs to deride the divisions of the opposition. Victory could no longer be taken for granted. And Tories from rock-solid seats have reported an increasing number of hostile comments about Mrs Thatcher and the government's style — coming from party activists as well as from uncommitted voters.

The question of where the government goes from here has become interlinked with the debate about tax cuts and public expenditure. In part this is a matter of rhetoric or of small changes at the margin, rather than of big shifts, but then so is most of politics. There has been the contradictory phenomenon that the very Tories whose protests restricted the Chancellor's freedom of manoeuvre ahead of the spring Budget, by opposing extending VAT and taxing pension funds, are often the very ones calling for tax cuts.

The argument of the disgruntled loyalists (for example the St Andrews school of young Tory MPs such as Michael Forsyth, Michael Fallon and Robert Jones) is that if the government is not going to introduce sizeable tax cuts, then what is its strategy? In short, is there any longer the political will to restrain the growth of public expenditure (cutting in aggregate is no longer seriously under consideration) to permit tax cuts?

The Cabinet discussions have so far gone rather better for the Treasury than it originally feared. The decision on 11 July to reaffirm the existing £139bn target for 1986-87 was more precise than it might have been. But the real battles will come later — in September and October after the Cabinet reshuffle. Then, say the sceptics, or consolidators as they are fashionably known, even Mrs Thatcher and her allies will recognise the political impossibility of further squeezing education and overseas aid

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Chris Davies/Network

Mrs Thatcher hemmed in by the revolt of the Thatcherites: (clockwise from bottom) King, Conway, Bruinvels, Amess, Hubbard-Miles, Dicks

to finance increased spending on social security. And they will thus acquiesce in higher spending and, with a little fudging here and there (reducing the contingency reserve and selling more public sector assets), there should still be plenty of room for pre-election tax cuts.

Better, say the sceptics, to drop all the tough talk, make a virtue of higher spending on social programmes (inadequate though it may be by many yardsticks) and still crow about cutting taxes. That was the logic of Peter Walker's 'don't despair' speech to Coventry Tories last Sunday.

On this view the government has already begun to pull back from the controversial decisions, witness the postponement until after the next general election of housing rent de-control, the dropping of proposals for student loans and the piecemeal reform of Wages Councils. All this has reinforced the doubts of the zealots about the government's political will.

THERE ARE, however, no signs of any public shift of economic strategy. Mrs Thatcher remains as robust as ever on public expenditure and the need for tax reductions. To some colleagues this appears to be a bunker mentality ignoring the revival of Labour and the Alliance threat. But any change — either of rhetoric or of the substance of policy — would probably not be credible after all that has been said and done over the past six years.

Admittedly, there may be fudges and compromises on the margins of public expenditure and taxation, and a few other controversial issues. But, overall, the Government remains radical by the standards

Words like insensitivity, arrogance, humility and justice cropped up again and again in the comments of MPs

of its opponents and of its predecessors. It has not run out of steam and opted for a quiet life. As Leon Brittan recently pointed out 'the future Parliamentary timetable is already jam-packed — it is a question of finding space for bills, not bills for space.'

The next Parliamentary session will include legislation on the Fowler social security reviews, on the privatisation of British Gas and the British Airports Authority, the restructuring of Wages Councils, public order, Sunday and late night shopping, drug trafficking, planning regulations, the role of building societies and the supervision of City securities markets. It is open to question whether these measures are the right mix for either the country or the Tories' short-term political popularity (even without rent de-control) but they are not safety-first.

Critics looking, or hoping, for some weakening of Mrs Thatcher's main resolve are also likely to be disappointed by the Cabinet reshuffle. The one certainty amid all the speculation is that the changes will not alter the balance of the Cabinet. An ex-Heath man like Kenneth Baker may at long last be promoted to the Cabinet but then so will 'one of us' to fill another vacancy. With Norman Tebbit as the new Conservative Party chairman (probable) and Cecil Parkinson back as Trade and Industry Secretary (possible) the Cabinet will still be very much in Mrs Thatcher's mould.

The rumblings of the backbenchers will be heeded insofar as more attention will be paid to presentation (as it always is at this stage of a Parliament given the impossibility of admitting that policy is wrong). But by this time next year, if the Government's popularity has not improved and the Tories have had poor results in London borough and metropolitan district elections next May, backbenchers are likely to become even more restive and keen for caution.

Mrs Thatcher is, however, under no personal threat this side of a general election. Moreover, if she goes down — and there is still plenty of time for a recovery — then it will be with all guns blazing. □

Peter Riddell is Political Editor of the Financial Times.

CHANGES TO NS LISTINGS

Starting with our issue dated **13 September**, Listings in its present form will be abolished and a new Listings service, called **AGENDA**, will take its place.

For a free leaflet giving full details of how the New Statesman's AGENDA column can help organisers of groups and meetings with their publicity please contact David Jones on 01-251 5487 or write to AGENDA, New Statesman, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1EB.

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END OF 'ON YER BIKE' ERA — NOW IT'S 'ON YER KNEES'

Tories have seized on 'rigidities' in the Labour market to explain unemployment. PATRICK WINTOUR exposes their lack of evidence

IN THE PAST year, as unemployment has remained stubbornly high, the Conservative Party has been looking across the Atlantic with increasingly envious eyes. The reason is not hard to find. Despite an increase in the US labour force — double the increase experienced in Europe — US unemployment is at 7.25 per cent, well below that of Europe's 11.25 per cent.

This is a strong reversal of the relationship ten years ago. Last year total employment in the US had risen by 14 million since 1974. Over 7½ million jobs were added between November 1982 and March 1985 alone. In Western Europe by contrast employment has fluctuated along a slowly rising trend, but has fallen off sharply by 3 million from its high point in 1980.

In the face of this contrasting story, British policy makers have naturally concluded there must be lessons to apply here. While the Thatcher government continues to insist that macro-economic policy cannot increase jobs or output, it has shifted its policy emphasis. Increasingly Tories play down the simple efficacy of monetary control and the reduction of inflation. Instead they look to government intervention to remove labour market rigidities, supposedly the magic ingredient in the American jobs boom.

The British are not alone in this obsession. 'Across Europe', according to Mr Tim Burt, editor of Incomes Data Services International Report, 'labour flexibility has become the buzz word'. In Germany, for example, the Kohl government pushed through, ironically on May Day, its employment protection law which encourages short term employment contracts and removes rights to consultation on redundancy. In Italy and Belgium unfair dismissal laws have been weakened. Measures have been introduced to encourage part-time working in Italy, France and Belgium.

Large European businesses, in the public and private sector, are considering following US trends by developing a two tier or segmented labour force. According to the Trade Union Research Unit at Ruskin College, the trend involves 'the break-up of the labour force into peripheral and flexible groups of workers clustered around a stable core. As the market grows the periphery expands to take up the slack; as growth slows, the periphery contracts.'

Those on the low paid periphery are workers on short term contracts, homeworkers, the self-employed part-time workers and those employed in contract firms. All these casual workers, unlikely recruits to trade unionism, ensure stable profit margins as demand for a company's product fluctuates. In the past 12 years, the number of full-time jobs, mainly in manufacturing and mainly held by men, fell by 2.3 million in Britain. The total of part-time jobs, mainly held by women, rose by 1.3 million.

The latest OECD report takes up the theme: 'If vigorous policies are taken to make the European economies more flexible, to strengthen incentives and to improve the functioning of markets, this might contribute to a restoration of business confidence and a revitalisation of the "animal spirits" upon which the dynamism of the market economies ultimately depends.'

Important reforms cited by OECD are 'de-indexation of wages in many countries, a weakening of the links between rates of increase of public and private sector pay, an increased tendency to link actual pay bargaining to company performance and more flexible hiring and firing practices'.

NOT SURPRISINGLY European trade unionists have become increasingly concerned at this new orthodoxy. A recent European Trade Union Institute report commented caustically: 'Flexibility means cutting real wages, cutting lowest wages most, breaking up national negotiating procedures, abolishing employment legislation, making it easier to sack people, increasing job insecurity and attacking health and safety legislation'. The report concludes bitterly: 'problems of low pay, inequality and insecurity which were once regarded as market failures are now being held up as virtues'. In short, the problem has become the solution.

Nowhere is the enthusiasm for flexibility and the American success story greater than within the British Treasury and Department of Employment.

Mr Nigel Lawson, for instance, recently asked rhetorically: 'Why has America seemed to do better than us as far as new jobs are concerned? One factor is surely a more flexible and adaptable environment in the US. Labour mobility and wages are more responsive, cheaper jobs will mean more jobs.' The government's task then is to create an intellectual and political climate where new jobs at relatively low pay could develop.

In the past few months four reports have been published by the government in an attempt to influence that climate of opinion. Two of the reports, 'Employment, the Challenge to the Nation' and a consultative paper on the Wages Councils have been published by the Department of Employment. A third, 'The Relationship between Employment and Wages' comes from the Treasury and a fourth, 'Burdens on Business', from the Department of Industry.

The 'Challenge to the Nation' argues that: 'the biggest single cause of unemployment is the failure of our jobs market, the weak link in the economy. . .A combination of obstacles and short comings have too often held people back from making themselves productive and affordable enough for employers to give them jobs.' Real wages for the employed have been rising steadily, it goes on, and reprimands employers and unions for failing to appreciate 'the effect of wage increases on the chances of the unemployed finding jobs'.

In short, despite mass unemployment and three trade union Acts designed to weaken

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labour monopolies, unions are so strong and socially irresponsible that they can still distort the natural rhythms of the labour market.

The government is duly promoting a series of co-ordinated reforms in order to restore a state of perfect competition in the labour market. 'Downward wage flexibility' is being introduced by cutting social security in order to make low paid work more attractive, by reforming Wages Councils, removing employment protection rights and minimising safety controls such as restrictions on working hours. Individually the changes are not striking, collectively, they may have a formidable impact.

The arguments the reforms throw up are fundamental. On the one hand socialists and liberals argue that the economy operates more efficiently and with less disruption through attempting to win a consensus about common goals. The New Toryism claims that income inequality and managerial authoritarianism are the real preconditions of efficiency, profitability and high investment.

Although such political arguments cannot be resolved empirically, examination does show that the British government's image of the US labour market is at best distorted. Moreover, the government's own research does not show that we have an inflexible labour market, an over-paid labour force or a business community craving for the reforms currently being implemented in their name.

There is no doubt that US trade unionism has been on the rack for some time. The percentage of the labour force in a union has dropped from 35 per cent in 1954 to 19 per cent today. In the growing service sector the fall has been from 13.5 to 10.6 per cent in the last four years.

The OECD estimates that pay increases in America in 1984 were the lowest for 17 years. Wage patterns are also being affected. Two tier pay plans — where new employees are recruited onto lower wage scales than existing workers — doubled as a percentage of new collective agreements in the US between 1983 and 1984. In the service sector 17 per cent of settlements contain two-tier agreements. Among airlines the figure has reached 35 per cent.

There is indeed evidence that US labour costs, excluding currency effects, have risen more slowly than elsewhere and have twice actually fallen during the '70s due to high inflation. One reason may be that long term wage contracts, which do not respond to sudden price increases (eg the oil price hike), are more common in the US.

NOW IT IS clearly desirable in terms of international competitiveness for real wages to rise slowly, but to what extent do real wages emerge as a result of the workings of the labour market, supposedly the 'weak link' in the British economy? The labour market is indeed the arena for wage bargaining, but this produces only *nominal* wages. David Metcalfe in the spring *Midland Bank Review* argues that the real wage which finally emerges depends on a series of complex interactions in the remainder of the economy, such as changes in the exchange rate and government monetary and fiscal policy over which the labour market has only partial influence. Thus, according to the IMF, the unit costs of US labour, taking into account the high dollar, have risen over 40 per cent since 1980 while UK costs have *fallen* by 14 per cent.

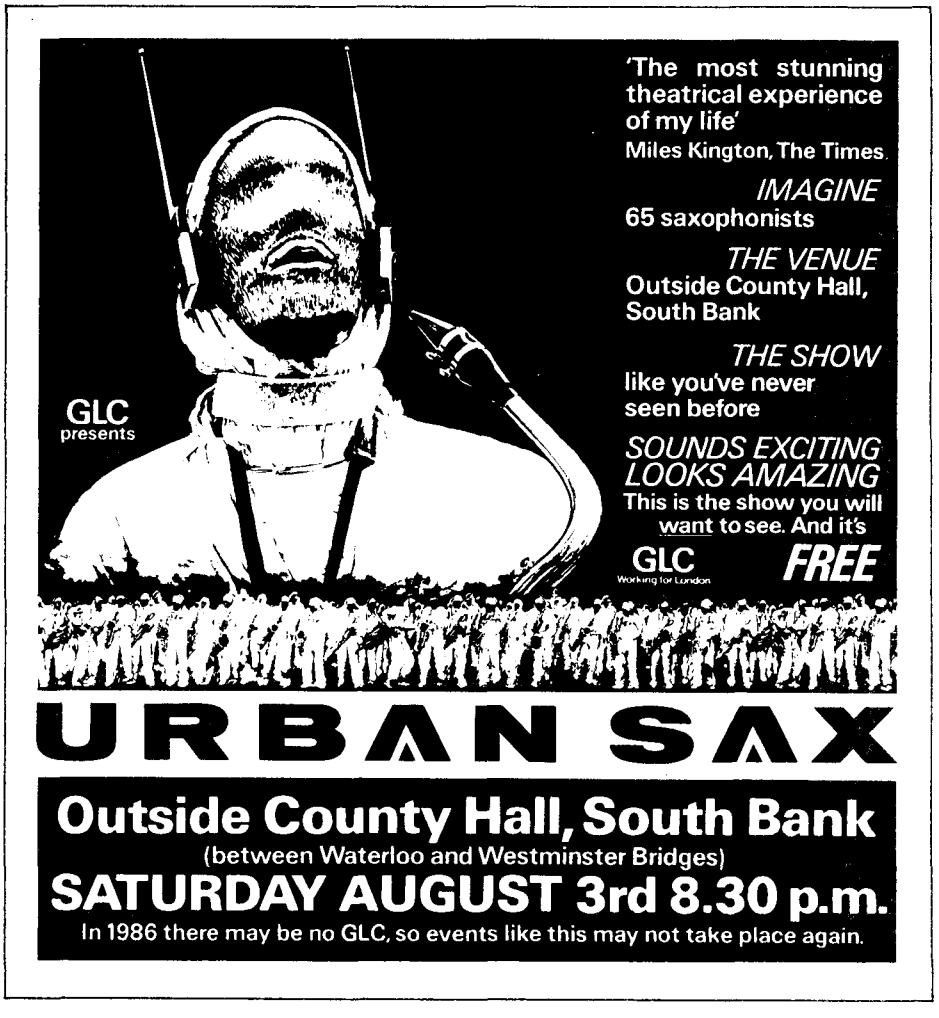
But if it's not average labour costs, perhaps it's the peculiarly low pay of the new labour periphery which creates jobs. A detailed comparative study of British and US labour markets (National Institute, November 1984) concludes: 'the industrial and occupational composition of the recent employment growth in America. . .does not point to any peculiar willingness on the part of American workers to accept low paid or low skilled jobs.'

Figures also show that, in many industries, high wages and new jobs go hand-in-hand. Five of the ten sectors with the highest growth in pay (hospitals, computer services, radio TV and music stores, periodicals and medical insurance) are in the top 25 per cent in terms of employment growth.

Simple concepts of labour flexibility also need closer examination. Although more Americans change jobs each year than Europeans, (27 per cent, compared with 10 per cent) the average length of job tenure in the USA is 14 years (only three years less than in Europe). This suggests US labour mobility is concentrated heavily amongst a minority of the workforce who face regular hire and fire. Finally, there is some evidence that divisions of labour within a US firm are less flexible, thereby explaining the relatively low American productivity rates.

No single explanation of a country's unemployment level is adequate, but it is arguable that American success in creating jobs stems from factors the British government cannot, or does not wish to, emulate. Low US productivity in the '70s, the large scale immigrant labour, political control of overseas markets and most of all government-led expansion through budget deficits and military spending all seem plausible explanations. The US annual budget deficit of around $200bn is equivalent to 6 per cent of GDP. In contrast EEC budget deficits as a proportion of GDP have fallen from 5.4 per cent to 4.6 per cent. In other words — words which are anathema to the government — the US government has spent its way out of unemployment through military contracts financed by State borrowing. □

Next week: Breaking the British labour force


'The most stunning theatrical experience of my life'
Miles Kington, The Times.
IMAGINE
65 saxophonists
THE VENUE
Outside County Hall, South Bank
THE SHOW
like you've never seen before
SOUNDS EXCITING
LOOKS AMAZING
This is the show you will want to see. And it's
FREE
GLC
presents
GLC
Working for London
URBAN SAX
Outside County Hall, South Bank
(between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges)
SATURDAY AUGUST 3rd 8.30 p.m.
In 1986 there may be no GLC, so events like this may not take place again.

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BREAD, BOMBS & BARCLAYS

JOHN TANNER reports on the controversial choice of Frank Judd as boss of Oxfam, now facing a newly political role

FRANK JUDD, a former Labour Foreign Office Minister, last month took over as director of an organisation which more than doubled its income last year to £51 million and, it claims, has more retail outlets than Marks and Spencer. The organisation, which was raising money for famine relief when Bob Geldof was only hating Mondays, is Oxfam.

Judd at 50 is a stocky pugnacious figure, balding and gap-toothed but full of enthusiasm and energy. He has spent the last five years running Voluntary Service Overseas where he managed to persuade Conservative Overseas Aid Minister, Timothy Raison, to treble the government grant to VSO. But for six months Judd has been 'doing my apprenticeship', as he puts it, at Oxfam.

He takes over the aid agency at a crucial time, when public interest in fighting famine has never been stronger and Britain's Third World charities have begun to paddle in the murky waters of politics. 'When people say voluntary agencies are not political, I don't understand what they mean', declares Judd and he is expected to encourage Oxfam's growing move to the Left.

Traditionally Oxfam has been deliberately apolitical so as not to offend its well-heeled supporters or to run foul of the Charity Commissioners. But last year, for example, the Oxford-based charity launched its 'Hungry for Change' campaign which specifically highlighted cash-crops, spending on armaments, unfair trade and the burden of debt as the main causes of famine in Africa.

'The law of charity in Britain is about maintaining the status quo and that is a very conservative political position', Judd insists. Oxfam and the other Third World charities are already planning a mass lobby of the House of Commons when MPs return in October, to demand action by the government to prevent future famines.

Judd began his working life as general secretary of International Voluntary Service and was first elected an MP, for Portsmouth West, in 1974. He was in turn a minister of state for the Navy, briefly for Overseas Development and then for the Foreign Office. He failed to win Portsmouth North in 1979 but looking back feels this was his 'liberation'.

His former boss at the then Ministry of Overseas Development, now Dame Judith Hart, is enthusiastic about him taking over the helm at Oxfam. 'If Oxfam needs commitment, experience, charm and a broad perspective, he's the very person and he certainly won't regard the success of private aid as a substitute for a decent government aid programme', she told the *New Statesman*. But Judd also feels that: 'Voluntary agencies have a tremendous responsibility to challenge the thinking of conventional politicians'.

He is the first Oxfam director not to be a

Rule by obscure peers No 1: Lady Trumpington

JOVIAL, STRAPPING, 62-year-old Baroness Trumpington has parlayed a defence mechanism into a popularity winner. The earthy jokiness she first adopted when she was a six-foot 11-year-old recently helped her push through the government's fluoride Bill over the protests of titled cranks. She both jollies and bullies her elderly colleagues and opponents with her extrovert humour, often at her own expense. Her best joke is about a visit to a National Stud stable where she excited a stallion. Asked whether she was wearing scent, known to arouse stallions, she retorted, 'Not only am I wearing scent, I am an ex-Mayor!' Her earthiness can go over the top. Recently Lords Hansard had to translate her explosion of 'balls!' as 'nonsense'. She upset Cambridge Tory ladies when she spoke of the Queen's 'farting Corgis'.

Her emergence as a funloving Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Social Security in the Lords in this Spring's reshuffle has shown what a lively style linked with commonsense can achieve in that creaking institution. The paucity of capable Ministers in the Lords has enabled her to get ahead there much faster than if she had succeeded in becoming the Tory candidate for Cambridge in 1976, as she wished, instead of Robert Rhodes James. Her hopes then were based on her successes as a city and county councillor and her role as a vivid Mayor in 1971-72. After she opened a local bridge, carpark and railway waiting hall, she proclaimed herself 'Jean, Jean the Transport Queen'.

She grabbed with both hands the offer of a life peerage at the end of 1979 and changed her name from plain Mrs Jean Barker to a stentorian Baroness Trumpington, after the Cambridge ward she had represented.

Lady Trumpington's earthiness has kept them laughing in the Lords ever since her 1980 maiden speech when she talked about incontinence. She has often recalled the elderly peer who warned against admitting peeresses, saying 'They will ruin the plumbing!' When she seconded the Royal Address in November 1982, she mentioned the suggestion of the Chief Whip, Lord Denham, that she wear a black chiffon nightdress as a reincarnation of Mata Hari, a tribute to her wartime work at the codecracking centre of Bletchley.

Often the banter spices up an essential commonsense, which separates her from the pompous and cranky. She aroused some anger among animal worshippers when she suggested driving sheep across Falklands minefields, explaining: 'You can put a sheep out of its misery and eat it. You can't do that with a man.' She is a strong consumerist, sometimes lining up with the radical Liberal Lord Avebury (formerly Eric Lubbock). She was successful in getting a Sunday trading Bill, written for her by David Tench of Consumers' Association, through its 3rd reading despite the opposition of Lord Sainsbury and Lord Allen of Fallowfield for the shopworkers.

She is distinctly left of Tory centre on crime and punishment. On the Board of Visitors to Pentonville until 1981, she proudly proclaims herself a supporter of NACRO, the body for the rehabilitation of prisoners.

Education is one area in which she is a class-conscious right-winger. In the March 1981 debate on educational cuts she humourlessly attacked the 'woeful ignorance' of Labour and other critics and their 'hysterical' and 'doctrinaire' attacks. She dismissed as 'prejudiced' the mild criticisms of Labour's former GLC Chairman, Baroness Denington. She contrasted Labour's baseless 'sentiment' with her own 'sense' derived from having been 'involved in the educational world for 27 years'. Since she left school at 15, this was purely a result of having married historian Alan Barker, ex-head of the private Leys School, Cambridge, and also a Tory councillor. Nor did she mention that she was President of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools.

This was one of a number of odd jobs which she picked up, helped by her new title. She became Steward of Folkestone Racecourse and Chairman of Daytime Television. One can understand the attraction of such offers because, until she went on the government payroll, initially as a Lords Whip in 1983, she had 'not a bean' herself.

Unlike many Thatcherites Lady Trumpington comes out of the traditional Establishment. Her father, Arthur Edward Campbell-Harris MC, was a Bengal Lancer and ADC to the Marquess of Reading when Viceroy of India. Her mother, an equally large and seemingly self-assured woman, was born in England of American parents who had plenty of money until the 1929 crash. 'Her idea of economy after that was to take a bus to the Ritz,' Jean Trumpington recalls.

Andrew Roth

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Frank Judd: tipped as a survivor

Quaker, although Judd has a strong non-conformist Christian background. In some ways he restores the charity's old links with Labour, which it enjoyed twenty years ago when Barbara Castle, the veteran Euro-MP, was the very first Minister of Overseas Development.

EVEN SO HIS appointment last year was not greeted with unanimous approval by Oxfam's staff of more than 250. One leading employee commented: 'The last thing we need is a failed Labour politician who never stops talking'.

But for the last six months Judd has been experiencing an intensive course of Oxfamisation, as director designate, while his predecessor and acting director, Guy Stringer, remained in charge of the charity. Anyone who has donated to Oxfam will be familiar with the appeal letters signed and often drafted by Stringer, who loved to talk about 'that dedicated group of young people at Oxfam House working away above the laundry in Banbury Road'. He plans to offer his services as a consultant fundraiser in Australia and the United States before he retires.

Today the charity is no longer the voluntary group of Quakers and academics it was more than 40 years ago, when it began as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, raising funds for hungry refugees in war-time Greece. Even so the Society of Friends connection lingers on.

At the top of Judd's in-tray is the Barclays Bank problem. He is clearly embarrassed that the charity still banks with Barclays which has a 50.45 per cent controlling interest in Barclays National of South Africa, which is the biggest foreign bank operating in the Republic.

'There will be a searching meeting of the Oxfam Council in November this year to look at our involvement with Barclays. But I don't think it would be helpful if I said any more at this stage', he added. A working group of Oxfam staff and Council members is examining banking options at the moment and is likely to recommend a switch.

Like a number of British companies, Barclays was founded by Quakers, and was the natural choice for Oxfam in the early days, particularly as no bank charges were made until two years ago. Now the charity's accounts department uses computer programmes which relate to Barclays so any change would be costly.

Some old hands at Oxfam value what they see as Barclays' unique international network particularly in Africa. But others argue that an agency fighting hunger cannot ignore the malnutrition which is rife in the 'homelands' that are an integral part of the apartheid system which they see Barclays supporting.

It is the kind of issue many of the volunteer shop workers, some of whom crowded Oxfam's annual meeting last weekend in Oxford, would rather not confront. But it is not one which is going to go away. Another is the charity's position on peace and disarmament, where the Quaker tradition provides a strong pacifist current.

Next month Judd's number two, Lieutenant Colonel David Jones, takes up his post at Oxfam House, despite considerable staff protests over his controversial appointment. 'How can we campaign for "bread, not bombs" when our deputy director has spent his life in the army?' asked a spokesperson for the staff, when Jones was first selected.

Judd was a member of the interviewing panel. He defended the appointment on the grounds that he too had done National Service and had been a Navy Minister but still held strong views about defence.

'All of us must be concerned about the deployment of cruise and Pershing and tactical nuclear weapons right up to the military front line', he says. 'Our defence depends explicitly on the first use of nuclear weapons against people whose governments are not accountable and that worries me', he adds.

How far he will take Oxfam into the political mire remains uncertain. 'Why is compromise such a dirty word?' he asks. 'We can't keep saying what's wrong with Britain is unyielding authoritarian politics and then reject compromise'. Oxfam over the last two or three years has run some fairly uncompromising campaigns about baby milks, medicine companies and the arms trade. But the new director strikes a note of caution. 'It is no good going around saying multinational companies are inherently evil, when in Oxfam we have a hell of a lot of members who work for multinationals', he says.

As Judd admits, 'The life of a typical voluntary agency boss is not exactly a long one'. Christian Aid's director, Charles Elliott, quit in 1984 after only two years and a series of rows with staff. His successor, Michael Taylor, does not take over until October. War on Want's George Galloway, still only 31, has held his job for just over 18 months.

But the chances are that Judd will be a survivor. He may never be nominated for the Nobel peace prize, still less be canonised by the press, but he believes in what Oxfam is trying to do. At the least, that is to end what he calls 'the murder of the innocent', the 15 million children who die of hunger every year. □

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FOWLER LETS SLIP HIS AIM FOR POOREST TARGETS

Figures for the new social security are now emerging. GORDON BROWN adds them up, and calls for a national campaign for claimants

THE FIRST detailed information on the true impact of the social security reviews has now become available, over six weeks after the Government's recommendations were announced and only eight weeks before the consultation period comes to an end.

With the disclosure of the figures, which ministers have systematically attempted to suppress even to the extent of ordering papers back for shredding, the true extent of the damage to the welfare state becomes clear. If the current proposals go ahead unamended, the majority of the country's four million supplementary benefit claimants and 200,000 Family Income Supplement claimants, and almost everyone on housing benefit will suffer. Some low wage families will lose as much as £10 a week and at least 2,000 widows will lose £35 a week. Planned savings in spending on social security exceed £1 billion.

As facts emerge on gainers (few) and losers (many), previous declarations about a 'nil cost' review and an intact supplementary benefits budget now mean nothing. Just under £200m is to be saved on the supplementary benefit budget by cutting benefits for 1.9m claimants, and taking 600,000 households off benefit altogether. One million pensioners and 550,000 unemployed men and women will lose cash once the transitional arrangements are ended — but so too will 200,000 single-parent families and 50,000 sick and disabled claimants.

Income Support Scheme

Savings: £180m
Lose Benefit altogether: 600,000
Other Losers: 1.94m

Losing	£5 + 290,000
Losing	£2-£5 . . . 890,000
Losing	£0-£2 . . . 780,000
Categories of losers:	
Pensioners	. . . 1,000,000
Unemployed	. . . 550,000
Lone Parents	. . . 200,000
Sick and Disabled	. . . 50,000

Staff Cuts: 3,000

The government claims that 'the new arrangements will give most help to those facing the greatest needs'. But among the biggest losers are the most frail pensioners and the severely disabled. There will be no adequate compensation for the loss of their special needs payments. Unemployed couples and single persons under 25 also stand to lose up to £10 a week. Government calculations reveal that 290,000 claimants will lose more than £5 a week, and 890,000 between £2 and £5 a week. Indeed, so many people are being taken off benefit that 3,000 civil servants working on supplementary benefit claims will lose their jobs.

These savings come *on top of* the £500m to be saved from housing benefit. Although 900,000 may gain as a result of the changes, 7.2m claimants — 4m of them pensioners — are to lose cash. Some will lose more than £6 a week in housing benefit, and 1.8m, including 1.2m owner occupiers, will be taken off housing benefit altogether. Every claimant will have to pay at least 20 per cent of their rates bill — an average of an extra £1.40 a week.

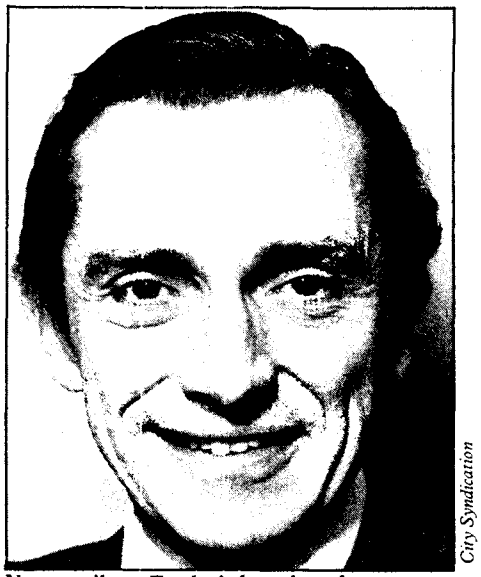
ALTHOUGH FAMILY poverty is identified by the Government as the major problem, there is nothing in the detailed figures to suggest that the problem is to be solved, or even tackled, by the review. The long-term plan is to freeze Child Benefit, with savings that could exceed £500m by 1987. But only a fraction of that sum, £75m, is to be 'targeted' to low wage families in the new Family Credit Scheme which is supposed to supplement the income of a family dependent on low wages.

As this is key to the Government's strategy of getting people to work for low wages, Family Credit, said the Green paper, was to be 'the greatest priority for additional resources'. But 100,000 low wage households currently on Family Income Supplement will lose an average of £5 a week. 20,000 working families will lose their entitlement altogether. One of the advantages canvassed for Family Credit was an improved take-up rate, as it will be paid through the wage packet. As FIS, the Government says, is claimed by only 50 per cent of those eligible, it 'has not been successful in meeting their needs'. Yet privately the Government admits that Family Credit will be claimed by only 60 per cent of eligible households.

Family Credit Scheme

Cost: £75m
Numbers covered: 300,000
Losers: 200,000 on Family Income Supplement not eligible for FIS
100,000 presently covered by FIS who will lose average of £5 weekly
Estimated take up: 60 per cent

The new Family Credit Scheme was designed, say ministers, 'to lessen the effect of the poverty trap.' But the final impact of the proposals will increase dramatically the numbers of families with marginal tax rates of between 80 and 100 per cent, ie who will lose between 80 and 100 per cent of any extra income in tax. This trap currently affects 70,000 families. It will go up to 360,000. In all, the total numbers of people, including single persons and childless couples, with marginal tax rates between 75 per cent and 100 per cent will exceed half a million.



City Syndication

Not a smile — Fowler's bared teeth

THE SOCIAL FUND, perhaps the most controversial of the Government's proposals, is to replace death grant, maternity grant, single payments, and some of the weekly additions. There will be an absolute cash limit, and the Fund will be locally administered without rules, rights or regulations for claimants. Decisions made on the discretion of local DHSS officers may not be challenged. To take the single example of funeral costs, the death grant, universal and not means tested, was paid on 600,000 occasions last year. According to government calculations, the new scheme will help only 20,000 with funeral expenses with, in most cases, a loan to be deducted from the estate of the deceased. But eligibility for the loan, and its conditions, will vary from office to office even within the same town. It hardly accords with the Government's claim that the Social Fund 'will be a more effective safety net for the minority of claimants with exceptional needs who cannot cope.' For the many very poor, everything over and above daily food and shelter can be an 'exceptional need.'

Widows will be worst hit by the new arrangements, with some widows losing hundreds of pounds as the present weekly allowance is replaced by a one-off payment. Another 2,000 widows under 40 will lose as much as £35 a week in the second twenty six weeks after their widowhood. Faced with these facts, the only concession made by the Government since the reviews were published is to exempt the widows' allowance from tax.

RARELY IN recent political history have declared principles been so promptly betrayed. The four stated themes of the review were simplification, fostering work incentives, a new partnership between State and individual, and 'targeting' to those most in need. Simplification now means simply cuts. Work incentives translates into penalising the unemployed and especially the young unemployed. The

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'partnership' ideal turns out to mean privatisation of long established welfare rights. The cynical manipulation embodied in the 'targeting' principle is revealed in detail by the figures on income support, housing benefit and family credit.

Women lose out especially heavily, with the value of child benefit cut, maternity and widows benefits reduced, and Family Credit to be paid normally to the husband. And the worst losers are those with least to lose — the 3m on means-tested benefits (now to pay 20 per cent of their rate bill) the severely disabled and the frailest pensioners with extra diet, clothing, and heating needs who are now to receive only the standard basic benefits. As simplification takes on the mask of social Darwinism, the weakest are to go to the wall.

From the beginning the review exercise was a shallow, cynical mockery of the claim to be the most fundamental overhaul since Beveridge. It is a review about which the electorate were never warned, in which consultation has been a charade, which is daily being deserted even by its own handpicked members, and whose conclusions are already being implemented in a series of child benefit and housing cuts this year.

At no point did Government ministers bother to study either the adequacy of current benefit levels or the conditions of poverty that their policies have created. The review teams knew nothing of the true extent of poverty; and those in poverty were to know nothing of the true extent of the reviews. Now that the facts and figures are out, a national campaign to fight the reviews is needed more urgently than ever. □

Gordon Brown is Labour MP for Dunfermline East.

LIVERPOOL THEATRE

BILLY PLANK AND THE WORLD'S GREAT PSYCHOPATHS

IAN WILLIAMS goes on the trail of Scouse actors

Vauxy Theatre and the Surrogate Mother

THE PLANKS (as in the colloquial, thick as two short ones) are on stage. Billy Plank is dead, and his brother has just revealed himself to be, not just a common or garden gangster, but an Open University Graduate in Sociology. Switching from Scouse to Sociologese, he relates his hope, now frustrated by the stiff lying centre stage, that by coming out on revenue-raising trips like this he could have written a book about him. 'After all' he declaims, 'Everyone writes books about the great psychopaths like Billy; fortunes have been made writing about the Yorkshire Ripper, . . . and Winston Churchill, Jack the Ripper . . . and Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan . . . and Donald Neilson . . .' For the first time the actor comes to earth, does a quick double take, before regaining enough aplomb to continue.

'I'd forgotten where we *were*' he told us afterwards, 'until no one laughed.' Where we were was Park Lane high security mental hospital. And some at least of the names on the 'publishers' list' had been inmates, or were even in the audience. 'I cut the list short' he said. 'I didn't want to offend anyone else!'

Vauxy Theatre, 'The Theatre of the People', were putting on a performance of 'Murder In The Alehouse', disingenuously called the worst whodunnit *ever* by John Dillon, who should know, since he wrote it. Apart from that minor hiccough of etiquette on stage, the audience had been enthusiastically appreciative, both of the barbed social comment, and the knockabout humour.

Drawn from all over the country, but mostly from working class backgrounds, the punters seemed to feel a likeness of spirit, even through the actors' thick Scouse accents. 'It's great', enthused one young patient from Yorkshire, 'We ain't seen nowt like this before. It's usually slide shows and Women's Institute choirs and things.'

On the front table was a group I'd dubbed the 'Drama Critics.' Whenever they applauded, they looked around to check that everyone else was. 'They're the really hard ones', said the baby-faced Cockney lad next to me. He was enthusiastic about the play and wanted to come to the sessions the group were putting on to start a drama group in the hospital, 'If I can fit it in with my martial arts classes'.

He had only one regret. Perri's performance as a Women's Lib exponent of 'Waki Scroti' the ancient Japanese martial art, allegedly developed over countless generations of Shinto nuns at a terrific cost to Samurai crotches, had enthused one of the patients. Self-appointed Master of Ceremonies, he had pecked her on the cheek when making the thank you speech. 'Wouldn't it've been *great* if she'd put the knee in on him,' enthused the Cockney. 'It would have brought the house down!'

AS WE WERE talking to the group of enthusiasts, 18 of whom turned up later in the week to form a drama group of their own, I began to wonder which side of the 60 foot concrete walls I was on. They wanted to know what motivated Vauxy Theatre. And in the end the reasons for its starting weren't that much different from the ones which would impel a similar initiative in the hospital.

Vauxy Theatre grew out of the Scotty Road Writers 83 Workshop down in deep dockside Liverpool. Most of the group are long-time unemployed. Ironically, one of the few with a job, Frances, who plays the whore with a womb of gold (she's a professional Surrogate Mother,

CATALOGUE OF CRUELTY

An eight-year-old Kent boy, deaf in one ear, developed a nervous tic and had nightmares after being repeatedly smacked in front of his classmates for slow work

Ian is just one of the many victims of Britain's child-beating teachers. His and scores of other cases of the emotional and physical harm done by 'corporal punishment' are detailed in *Catalogue of Cruelty*, a 92 page dossier published by the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP).

Catalogue of Cruelty shows how 'corporal punishment' is an immoral, damaging and degrading practice which should be outlawed. Copies are available for £2.50 plus 28p postage from **STOPP, 18 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB (Tel: 01-980 8523).**

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selling babies round the pubs), has a job at the National Giro Centre in Bootle. As the only growth industry in the area, sending out the cheques for which the rest of the group and their neighbours are supposed to sit and wait, if not 'At Her Majesty's Pleasure, like some of the audience, at the pleasure of an even remoter authority.

Many of the group felt uneasy while in there. 'We did Walton Gaol' says Dave Williamson, artistic director, 'and the cons were great, a fantastic audience, they loved it, but the atmosphere, the screws, it was all too heavy'. Even here, though it was a different, friendlier regime, it was still heavy.

It wasn't the Category A patients, the inmates, it was the institution. There are probably as many psychopaths, and more chance of violence, in the pub audiences for which Vauxy usually played; but the troupe *felt* the constraint, felt the restrictions. When we were let out, through the airlock type sets of doors, under the scrutiny of the closed circuit television cameras, the relief was tangible. People *like us* went into places like that — and couldn't get out.

In the van going back, Big Hughie, aka Billy Plank, had come back to life. Crammed in as we were among the dismantled sets, racing to hit base before closing time, he talked about his dismal day. Unemployed in an area with something like 50 per cent unemployment, his trips out to take part in Vauxy had not gone unobserved.

Some un-neighbourly human equivalent of the CCTV had reported him to the DHSS for going out to work. The Snoops were benevolent. They let him sign a document that he would accept work if offered, and not let his creative activities come between him and a job.

On one side of the wall you sit and wait until you're sent back to your cell, waiting for the release that may never come, on the other side you sit and wait until you're sent back home to wait for your Giro Cheque, and the job that you know won't *ever* come. It's no wonder the happy ending of 'Murder In The Alehouse' is so improbable. Vauxy Theatre mirrors the life around. It gets financial support from Merseyside County Council — until abolition next year. What happy ending? □

This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcards, please.)

□ The following announcement heard recently on Rhyl station must be one of the best produced by British Rail: 'This train is running ahead of schedule due to the lateness of the trains following.' — *Guardian* (James Scott)

□ The Tories have come up with some really sharp new hocus-pocus to reduce the unemployment figures. . .by a dazzling two thirds. Sir John Hoskyns, former head of the government's Think Tank and now director-general of the Inst. of Directors, says the jobless figure is not 3,250,000 — as many of us had believed — but only 1,250,000. Sir John explains that at any one time up to two million people are merely 'between jobs'. Magic. — *Daily Mirror* (Stuart Hackney)

Starving the viewer of airtime on Ireland

Francis Wheen

AN OVERWHELMING sense of *déjà vu* came over me when I saw the splash headline on the front of last week's *Sunday Times*: 'Thatcher Slams IRA Film'. The headline is used so often that I wouldn't be surprised to learn that it is kept permanently set up in type. Remember the notorious 'INLA interview', the notorious 'Carrickmore incident', the notorious 'Danny Morrison interview' and all those other notorious occasions when television has tried to cover Northern Ireland at greater length than a news bulletin?

For all its tedious predictability, however, the *Sunday Times* story was interesting for a couple of reasons. First, it was a good excuse for yet more BBC-bashing from the Murdoch press. As Alasdair Milne and others have pointed out, Rupert Murdoch is hardly a disinterested party in matters to do with British broadcasting: he has a vested interest in seeing the Corporation broken up and, by a remarkable coincidence, his newspapers have been firing at the BBC with both barrels for some months.

But the second and most important point about the *Sunday Times* story is that it appeared less than a fortnight after the Prime Minister's speech to the American Bar Association. 'We must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend,' she told the assembled Perry Masons on 15 July. 'In our societies we do not believe in constraining the media, still less in censorship. But ought we not to ask the media to agree among themselves a voluntary code of conduct, a code under which they would not say or show anything which could assist the terrorists' morale or their cause while the hijack lasted?'

According to the Thatcher view of the world, Northern Ireland is simply a rather large TWA jet which has been 'hijacked' by 'terrorists' for many years. And 'anything which could assist the terrorists' morale or their cause' means, in this context, anything *about* the terrorists and their cause. Thatcher and her colleagues have sought for some time to emphasise that Sinn Fein is not a 'respectable' political organisation but a mere 'front' for the 'men of violence', aka the Provisional IRA

Yet this very point is made in the BBC documentary, in which Martin McGuinness says quite openly that 'the only way the Irish people can bring about the freedom of their country is through the use of arms'. What could be clearer than that? It is hard to imagine that anyone who didn't previously support Sinn Fein would be magically converted to their cause as a result of watching the programme. So what is all the fuss about?

Several things. The first is the desire of politicians such as Thatcher to be allowed to control the terms of public debate. On Tuesday's *World At One* Douglas Hurd was asked if it wasn't reasonable for the BBC to allow Sinn Fein to express their views from time to time. He replied that everyone knew what Sinn Fein's views were already, so the programme ought to be stopped. If this were really the Government's criterion for censorship — no one should be allowed on television to express views that are already familiar to the public — we should see very little of Thatcher and her friends on our screens. But of course Hurd didn't mean that.

Thatcher can have as much airtime as she wants to say whatever she likes, but Martin McGuinness is apparently such a potent fellow that he mustn't be allowed to appear in even one short documentary, for fear that the British State will come tumbling down.

Which brings me to another interesting feature of the row. As a matter of fact Martin McGuinness *has* already appeared in a documentary on British television: he was interviewed at length in Mary Holland's series for London Weekend Television about Ireland which was transmitted last year. So far as I am aware there was not a whisper of protest from Thatcher. Nor, so far as I'm aware, has his appearance in the series brought the great edifice of the British State crashing to the ground.

It is significant that last year's interview with McGuinness was on ITV. For all their pious noises to the contrary, Thatcher and her colleagues do regard the BBC as an arm of the government. Of course ITV companies have sometimes run into trouble with current affairs programmes about Ireland, but with these the pressure has usually come from the IBA rather than directly from Downing Street. In the case of the BBC, however, the government has had no hesitation in wading in, ever since Reginald Maudling tried to stop *The Question of Ulster* in the early 1970s. Following *Tonight*'s INLA interview in 1979, Thatcher said: 'I am appalled it was transmitted and I believe it reflects gravely on the judgment of the BBC and those responsible.' Later the same year, after the Carrickmore incident, she said: 'It is not the first time I have had occasion to raise similar matters with the BBC. Both the Home Secretary and I think it is about time they put their house in order.'

The effect of this intimidation has been to prevent the BBC from giving much serious attention to Northern Ireland: such programmes, broadcasters have come to believe, are more trouble than they're worth. At last, nearly six years after Carrickmore the Corporation has dipped a hesitant toe in the water to see if it can plunge in; but it has found that the water is as freezing as ever, and is likely to remain so for some time. □

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DIARY

Anne Smith

'The town's full of Yanks,' a taxi-driver said to me, 'and 90 per cent of them's lobotomised — I mean, they ask the *stupidest* questions. . .' So I cracked a cruel joke about President Reagan's brain surgery. While that was still on my conscience I read in the *Spectator* a curious article by Christopher Hitchens calling on the ole cowpoke to resign on the grounds — or so it would seem if you read it as quickly as I did — of the effect on his already weak intellect of his now having to visit the lav more often than before. Carter, on the other hand, whom some claim to have been the most intelligent president God's own country has had since the war, had haemorrhoids, which are usually associated with constipation. I'm trying to read some significance into this, but so far all I can come up with is the absurd conclusion that the best of commentators secretly believe that politics is a load of shit.

○

In the same issue, Auberon Waugh is moved to write: 'What is significant about Band Aid and Live Aid is not that some African lives may be saved, or that it matters much in the longer perspective whether they are saved or not. . .'. This man needs treatment; clearly he thinks he's God.

○

Or does it strike only me like that? I wonder, for as time goes by I find myself more and more an outsider. Rebecca West wrote to me towards the end of her life that she could feel the Angel of Death searching her brain, cancelling out her memories in order to wean her from the world. What strange angel is working on me now, honing me down to my most basic wants and needs, to the point where the rest of the world appears to be impossibly baroque, ludicrously obsessed with the ornamental trivia of everyday life?

○

Well, not quite the rest of the world. I have here an invitation to the private view of an exhibition of pictures, sculpture and video by Edith Simon. The show is called 'Moderation be Damned', the sample of work on the card is a painting entitled 'The Creation of God and Heaven and Hell', and there's a little note printed underneath it saying '**NOT** subsidised by the Scottish Arts Council'. Oh by God I thought, recognising another voice crying in the wilderness, that's one opening I shall definitely attend. *Moderation be damned*: I hope to get drunk there.

○

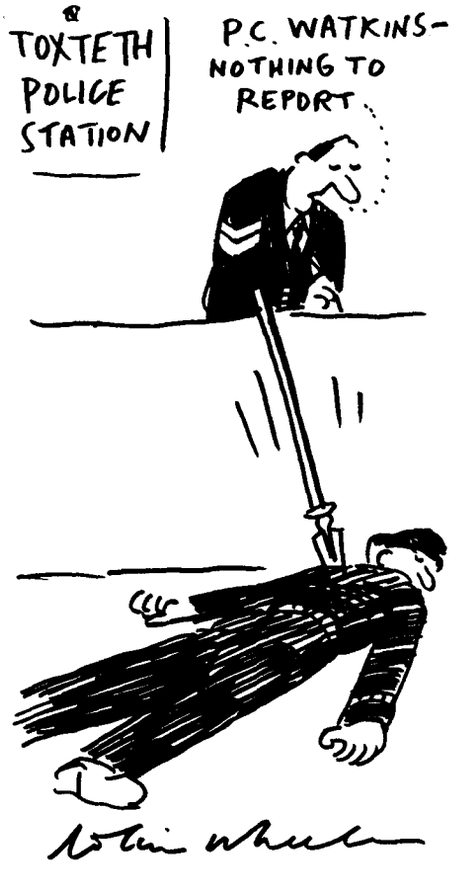
Partly that response is the result of my six months in Sicily, I expect. I did not want to return. I love Italy like a lover, and moderation be damned. The day after I got back I sought to ease the pain of separation by walking through Edinburgh, familiarising myself with its stones again. But all I could see was the neat, trimmed and tidy little Calvinist gardens. Anal retentionism extended to horticulture. . . somewhere between the Valley of the Temples and a mountainside in Taormina, I have been possessed by the god Pan, and am discovering now the truth of Pascal's 'Nature is an infinite sphere of which the centre is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. . .'

○

Tristesse d'été, Mallarmé called it, that yearning for the indifference of the rocks and the azure sky, a melancholy summer mood that was not helped by having to finalise my choice for an anthology of love poetry. I can only offer in my defence the fact that my favourite of them all was Thomas Flatman's wry, down-to-earth, 'Ye cats that at midnight spit love at each other.'

○

And that simultaneously I am devoting a lot of my saner moments to the practical matter of helping to get a new arts magazine, the *Women's Review*, on its feet and ready to astonish you all at the end of October. In the process I've been somewhat astonished myself, to learn how many hundreds of new magazines land on the distributors' desks every month. Far from casting me down with a 'one among many' feeling, though, the statistics buck me up no end, to the extent that I have begun to sense a groundswell of determined optimism in the land. We have Mrs Thatcher to thank for this, of course, as for so many other things: at last, we might be in a position where we feel we've nothing to lose — and that's when people start achieving things, isn't it? Dunkirk spirit, and all that. . .?



○

Anyway, my 86-year-old friend believes in miracles all the more as she gets older. One day last week, she writes to me, when she was suffering from an intestinal infection and her usual chronic dizziness, and her usual brandy had alleviated neither, and the WRVS brought her only four books, she just prayed hard and 'God sent them back in the late afternoon with *26* books!' I like to think that was the Lord's way of saying, 'Moderation be damned'.

ROGER WODDIS

A Right Royal Tribute

All hail to Her Majesty, Queen Mother supreme!
Most magnificant lady to be seen,
Whose loyal subjects revere her without dismay,
And most gratefully their respects do pay,
Because she has reached the great age of eighty-five,
And unlike Queen Victoria is still alive.

Born Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, ninth child of Lord Glamis,
She has captivated all with her many charms,
And she has done her duty with good cheer,
Which will be remembered for many a year,
And especially by our government that is feeling glum,
And the press too says, 'Thank God for the Queen Mum!'

Oh! she is most gracious in every way,
And she takes our minds off top people's pay,
And in conclusion let us all feel proud,
Because in her praise we cannot speak too loud,
And let us be thankful for her wonderful smile,
Which helps us forget the unemployed for a while.

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LEFT WITH A LEGACY OF CHAOS

MICHAEL SELWYN traces the background to this week's coup and finds that Uganda is on the brink of further bloodshed

Camera Press

Milton Obote: 'only paid lip-service to the idea of national unity'

THE SWEARING-IN on 29 July of Lieutenant-General Tito Okello as Uganda's new head of state, following the overthrow of president Milton Obote two days earlier, marks the end of a sad chapter in the country's recent history and again highlights a burning question: how to establish a government of national unity in a country bitterly divided along tribal, ethnic, religious and cultural lines.

The scenes in Kampala of looting, gunfire and army disorder that accompanied the ousting of Obote were eerily reminiscent of the 1979 coup against Idi Amin, yet emphasised the lack of progress made to heal the divisions and strife of that era. For the new military ruling council the task of achieving national reconciliation will be much harder than that faced by Obote in March 1980 on his return from exile. Above all Obote leaves no obvious successor with sufficient skill and experience to guide the country.

The fissile, multi-layered and complex pattern of events taking place now reflect the tribal rivalries that have always been a driving force in Uganda. Before independence in 1962 the country was developed under British colonial rule on tribal lines and was unique among Britain's African colonies in having four hereditary kingdoms, each with its own entrenched position and traditions. In addition the languages and customs of each of the 63 tribes were protected by the British.

The conflict between tribal traditions and modern politics was a common characteristic of African countries after colonial rule. In neighbouring Kenya and Tanzania it was largely overcome by the emergence of leaderships, headed by Jomo Kenyatta and Julius Nyerere, who by virtue of their charisma and ideology were able to harness the tide of African nationalism into a unifying force.

YET OBOTE was never able to build the same kind of consensus in Uganda, although he paid lip-service to the ideals of national unity. As a member of the northern Langi tribe his policies were viewed with suspicion by the Baganda, Uganda's largest tribe from the old kingdom of Buganda, in the south. The feeling intensified when Obote abolished the kingdoms in 1967.

The accusation of tribalism led to the first overthrow of Obote in January 1971, while he was attending a Commonwealth leaders' conference in Singapore. Idi Amin, who led the coup against him, was also a northerner but a Muslim from the small Kakwa tribe and he gave Muslims — representing no more than 10 per cent of the population — a preferential position. Amin mistrusted the Langi and their neighbours, the Acholi tribe. Both groups suffered badly under Amin; many Langi and Acholi soldiers fled into exile in the 1970s and returned after Amin's downfall.

The pursuance of tribalism has severely undermined the development of a democratic system of government acceptable to all sectors of the population and the odds were heavily stacked against Obote when he resumed power. The symptoms of the present crisis were already in evidence during the unsettled 15-month period that followed Amin's defeat by Tanzanian-backed forces. The run-up to the December 1980 general election was marked by killings, arrests, harassment and vote-rigging. Yet the result of that election was scarcely overwhelming for Obote. His party, the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), won 1,929,568 votes and 72 seats, the opposition Democratic Party (DP) won 1,930,511 votes and 52 seats and Yoweri Museveni's Uganda Patriotic Movement only one seat.

SINCE THEN the Thatcher government, eager to cultivate an ally in one of Britain's most strategically placed former colonies, has taken the lead in marshalling international economic and military support for Uganda. The Overseas Development Administration has given more

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than £50 million in concessional aid and has provided military assistance to the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), the official government force. Multilateral aid agencies — including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and EEC — pledged $450 million for development programmes, in the Foreign Office-inspired hope that an economic recovery which delivered essential goods, revived a run-down industrial sector and rewarded farmers with realistic prices would in time soothe resentment and lead to political stability.

At first the strategy appeared to pay off. Production of staple crops and tea and coffee, the main exports, recovered and programmes were set in motion to repair the country's war-ravaged infrastructure. Uganda was quoted as a textbook example of how IMF policies could be applied to stimulate rapid economic growth in a third-world context. Yet the small amounts of aid that were actually disbursed were insufficient to boost national earnings and overcome unemployment. An expansionary budget was announced by Obote in June 1984, in which public spending rose by 90 per cent and public-sector wages were tripled. This was designed to win votes for the general election scheduled for later this year, but was regarded as undoing the benefits of the recovery plan. By early this year inflation had soared into three figures and public-sector employees — their earnings dramatically eroded — were forced into moonlighting jobs to pay for their family bills.

The country's consistently weak economic performance has in turn reflected Uganda's political instability; the two are intertwined. Economic recovery has also been hampered by armed resistance from the National Resistance Army, set up by Yoweri Museveni of the Uganda Patriotic Movement after the 1980 elections. Museveni's forces have been spearheading opposition to UNLA in the fertile Luwero triangle north of Kampala. One of their strengths lies in the fact that they are a broad coalition of opposition, drawn from different tribes.

The events that led to Obote being ousted by the army for the second time, however, were triggered in his own back yard, by the resentment of Acholi officers in the UNLA — the Acholi have traditionally formed the backbone of the army — at the accelerated promotion of Langi soldiers. The Langi/Acholi split within UNLA was exacerbated by Obote's stepping-up of anti-insurgency operations against Museveni's National Resistance Army, in which the Acholi troops complained that they had suffered an unfair number of casualties, while the higher-ranking Langi officers stayed safely in their barracks. The split within UNLA became final in July, which led to fighting between the rival groups in Kampala and to the flight of Okello — UNLA's commander in chief — to the northern town of Gulu, from which the final offensive against forces loyal to Obote was launched.

THE NEW MILITARY council, which has promised elections within the next 12 months, is faced with a serious vacuum of authority. The army is divided along tribal lines, conventional party politics are ineffectual, there are deep divisions among political exiles, intellectuals have been murdered or driven into exile, and army discipline is in tatters.

If stability is to be restored a government of national unity, bringing together the major ethnic and tribal groups, is essential. Okello, who is 71 and does not have a track record of political ambition, is expected to play only a caretaker role. Okello will appoint a prime minister to oversee the transition period before the election. The presence of Democratic Party leader Paul Ssemogerere at Okello's swearing-in indicates that his party, which enjoys support in the south and west of the country, will be included in the new administration. Exiled former president Godfrey Binaisa has also offered to serve although overtures to the new regime by Amin — who is living in exile in Saudi Arabia — have been rejected.

However, no new political line-up will be able to survive for long without the participation of Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA), where armed strength is now 9,000 soldiers, against UNLA's 15,000. It has also extended its campaign from the Luwero triangle to western regions of the country, and its capture last week of the strategic town of Fort Portal proves that its support is increasingly broad-based.

The appointment of Okello as head of state is almost certain to be opposed by the NRA, which has made it clear that a military government — which now looks likely — would be unacceptable in the interim period leading up to elections. A previous attempt to set up a government of national unity as an alternative to Obote — alleged to have been masterminded by Obote's vice-president Paulo Muwanga earlier in 1985 — is believed to have foundered on this point. In addition Okello's attachment to the previous regime — he supervised Obote's anti-insurgency campaign against the NRA — also makes him unacceptable.

If the NRA decides to continue its guerrilla war one of the country's main political factions will be excluded from the new government and the bitter internal strife, which has already led to the massacre of up to 200,000 civilians since 1981, will continue. Given the present state of the official army, the NRA could probably win a civil war within weeks. It is a testimony to Museveni's stated preference for a government of national unity without further bloodshed, that he is willing to bide his time for a negotiated agreement.

One way out of the impasse would be for an outside country to organise a round-table conference of political leaders, along the lines of the 1979 conference in Moshi, Tanzania, which was set up by president Nyerere and led to the formation of a short-lived political coalition, the Uganda National Liberation Front. However with Tanzania beset with political uncertainty and Nyerere about to step down from office after 24 years, a repeat of this option seems unlikely. Nevertheless the recent positive dialogue between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda offers hope of an externally sponsored solution. Obote's overthrow provides a major opportunity for reappraisal and change; but unless Okello is serious about working with the different sectors of the opposition Uganda could dissolve into further chaos and bloodshed. □

Michael Selwyn is a staff writer on Africa Economic Digest.

PAKISTAN

WOMEN RALLY TO TEAR DOWN VEIL AND FOUR WALLS

MOHSIN A. BANGASH reports on the incitement to hate women

THEY HAD ALL come to see the flogging of a woman. The place was a hockey stadium in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and the woman was a school teacher who had allegedly committed adultery.

The police had made a wide stage on one side of the ground where the woman was to be flogged. A small group of constables was guarding the stage while the others were sitting at a little distance and waiting for the woman to be brought.

The people converged on the compound and soon it was full; many of them had to go to the adjacent road from where the stage was visible. Those on the road were discussing the event in groups of fours and fives while those in the compound were making a strange humming noise like the buzzing of flies. The police

Camera Press

A woman who steps outside her home without a veil is morally corrupt

officials, who looked eager to discharge their duty, were constantly in touch with their superiors on small wireless sets.

It was a hot and humid April afternoon and the smell of the sweat dominated all other odours in the group. The sweat trickling down the people's necks was making them restless. They had been waiting for hours for the 'tamasha' (show) to start.

Suddenly, some high officials of the district administration arrived there in a Jeep and ignoring the crowd went straight to the policemen in the ground. They left as they had arrived. Their departure was followed by a flurry of activity and exchange of messages on wireless sets.

One of the police officers climbed the stage and announced that the public flogging had been cancelled and the woman would now be punished in the jail.

There was an obvious disappointment in the crowd. They had come to see the 'tamasha' and were not ready to go back without that. The buzzing sound became louder and restless. When a small group of people tried to be louder than others in expressing disappointment, they

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were dispersed by the police. They were silenced but not all of them were yet ready to leave so they remained for hours after the announcement — in small groups — discussing the 'event' (or the non-event).

Ghulam Sarwar, a retired government servant from Shakrial (a village near Rawalpindi) who had been waiting for the last two hours to see the flogging, was much concerned about what he called 'this lenient attitude of the authorities'. This would encourage crime, he said. She should be brought out of the jail and flogged in public.

Mohammed Imtiaz, a labourer, wanted to know: 'If they were going to postpone the flogging, why did they make such a fuss?' Akram, a school teacher, Aijaz, a technician, Matloob, a student of English literature at a local college, they all wanted the punishment to be carried out in public. Among 30-odd people interviewed, only Iftekhar, a male nurse and Zia, a student, were happy that the flogging was postponed.

Are people always like that or is this sadistic attitude a new phenomenon? The stoning to death of an illegitimate baby in Karachi, the parade of naked women in Multan, raping of female prisoners in the country's jails — all these indicate an unprecedented increase in sexual crimes. Why?

THE WOMEN'S ACTION FORUM (WAF), an organisation fighting against male domination and for a better status for women in Pakistani society, blames the repressive policies on the present regime. It is one of four women's organisations to condemn the 'Suggestions of the Commission on the Status of Women', published last week. The commission was set up to 'guide' the government on its attitude to women. Its findings are due to be discussed by the national assembly where — contrary to government hopes — it is expected to be given a rough ride. Women's organisations are particularly angry because the commission has taken no notice of their comments. They say that its suggestions reinforce existing repressive attitudes towards women and have been given a dubious gloss of authenticity by the fact that the commission members were women — albeit handpicked by President Zia's government.

Afshan Malik, a women's activist, believes that male machismo has reached its height during the present regime. 'Women are being reduced to the status of a second-class citizens.' She was referring to the laws implemented during the last few years. One of the laws stipulates that in serious crimes (including rape) the testimony of a woman is worth half that of a man. According to another law, if a woman is murdered, her family would get only half the compensation it would if she were a man.

When the law of evidence was presented before the Shoora (the former, non-elected parliament of Pakistan), women members walked out. But despite their protest it was approved.

The Women's Forum has recently also pointed out discrimination against women in the industrial and agricultural sectors. This discrimination is protected by laws that have fixed women's wages below those of men.

It is not only laws which have contributed to the present anti-women fervour. The official state media's lauding of the sanctity of *Chadar and Chahardevari* (the veil and the four walls) has exacerbated the situation. A woman who steps outside her home without a veil is now considered morally corrupt.

A woman, at best, is only acknowledged as a mother, a wife, a sister, or not at all. She has no identity of her own. Women are discouraged from going out and their social lives are almost non-existent. A woman's mind is filled with false fears from childhood. Even to talk to a man, she first has to establish an accepted social relationship with him. He is always addressed as Bhai (brother), Chahca (uncle) or Baba (father). Thus men hold her responsible for their own sexual frustration and moral and social degradation.

Although under President (also General and Chief Martial Law Administrator) Zia democracy is non-existent, women's organisations are becoming increasingly militant and vocal and it will be difficult for the government to continue to ignore them. □

SOUTH AFRICA

BLACK BOYCOTT HURTS BUSINESS

PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK on how black people are using their economic power

Johannesburg

BLACK South African consumers, denied a vote in the central government, are starting to exercise one of the few votes that they do have — their economic buying power.

Though they are the poorest section of the South African community, blacks account for a large slice of the country's private consumption expenditure. In the centre of 'white' Johannesburg, for instance, buying power is 50 per cent black.

In the current climate of protest and heightened political consciousness, blacks have become increasingly aware of this consumer muscle. Boycotts have been used in labour disputes and as a political weapon, particularly in the East Cape province.

Over half of the white traders in the country's fourth-largest city, Port Elizabeth, are reported to be threatened with bankruptcy as a result of a boycott in support of political demands. The boycott was led by local affiliates of the anti-apartheid United Democratic Front whose list of demands included the release of detainees still held since the Langa massacre of 21 March in which at least 19 people were shot dead by police.

Some 50 smaller Eastern Cape towns in an arc around Port Elizabeth have also been affected by boycott action and shops are already reported to be closing in two of the bigger centres, Port Alfred and Vitenhage.

Any hope of a resolution to the boycott appears to have been ended by the State of Emergency which has led to boycott leaders either being arrested or fleeing into hiding. Mkhuseli Jack, the 26-year-old Port Elizabeth Youth Congress leader and public spokesperson for the boycotters, said from his place of hiding last week that the Emergency had violated every demand of the boycott committee.

The boycott of white shops on such a large scale represents a new and seemingly effective phase in the black struggle, although in fact the boycott weapon is not a new form of black protest.

Boycotts of buses protesting against fare increases have been common since the 1940s. In the past two years the Mdantsane bus boycott in the Ciskei homeland and a boycott in Kwazulu earlier this year have been successful in mobilising political opposition on a bread-and-butter issue.

In recent years consumer boycotts have usually been associated with labour disputes where the community has rallied to the support of dismissed workers. A nationwide boycott in 1979 of pasta manufacturers, Fattis and Monis' Products, won recognition for the Food and Canning Workers' Union and reinstatement for some 60 workers.

Boycotts in support of meat workers in Cape Town in 1980 and sweet workers sacked by British multinational Wilson Rowntree in East London in 1981 were less successful, and cast doubts on the value of black boycotts. But with township protest boiling up again in 1984, creating the right climate for concerted community action, unions won major victories at two companies — Simba Chips and Dairy Maid ice-cream.

The Metal and Allied Workers' Union went even further in its dispute with tyre and rubber company Sarmcol, a subsidiary of BTR, another British multinational, which sacked about 900 workers over a recognition dispute in May. The workers launched a total boycott of the 'white' shops in the town of Howick in Natal, which preceded and gave a lead to the Eastern Cape boycotts, and last week threatened to extend the boycott into the city of Pietermaritzburg.

On the country's closed-compound gold mines, which employ some half-a-million workers, the recent rapid unionisation of the workforce has opened up a whole new sense of black workers' economic muscle.

Miners have been boycotting monopolistic concession stores, liquor outlets and taxi services on the mines, forcing them to charge prices sanctioned by worker committees linked to the National Union of Mineworkers.

In the wake of these regional boycotts, and the extent to which they have been spreading, blacks are clearly gaining an appreciation of their own economic power as consumers. Putting pressure on businesses also reflects a growing perception that white business is in league with apartheid, and that the targets of protest should not just be the symbols of the state.

Until now, there has been no national boycott either for political or bread-and-butter issues — although there was an abortive national bread boycott two years ago. But before the State of Emergency put a stop to any organising, the Reverend Allan Boesak, a leading civil rights cleric and patron of the UDF, mooted a national boycott of white businesses. Given the growing awareness of their economic power, it may only be a matter of time before blacks use their economic citizenship to vote for the political citizenship they have been denied. □

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LETTERS

Not a single Cape grapefruit

Kay Williamson, Visiting Scholar, University of Leiden, The Netherlands

Your report on the Irish supermarket workers (*NS* 19 July) who refused to handle South African goods is important in showing that action by a few people who will stand up for what is right can be effective.

After living in Holland for nearly a year, I have not yet seen Outspan oranges or grapefruit on sale here, and Cape grapes only twice. Reason: an effective Boycott Outspan group working in association with a wider Anti-Apartheid Movement. Another campaign to boycott the Krugerrand has resulted in at least two major banks ceasing to offer it for sale.

Mrs Thatcher's government has refused to take any action towards an economic boycott of South Africa, even in the light of the past week's events. Can groups and individuals not now stand up and say that they are revolted by apartheid and will have nothing whatsoever to do with it or its products?

No-rate strategy vindicated

Graham Norwood, Deputy Leader, Lambeth Council

The cynical piece on ratecapping written by Joan Smith and Francis Wheen (*NS* 26 July) contrasts sharply with a previous *New Statesman* article and, incidentally, with the truth.

Three weeks earlier you were saying, rightly, that Lambeth appeared to be winning its argument within the labour movement that non-compliance with the 1984 Rates Act was the only alternative to cutting jobs and services. You also said, again rightly, that other Labour councillors were backing Lambeth's legal challenge to a district auditor intent on turning any resistance to Thatcher into allegedly illegal 'wilful misconduct'. The Smith/Wheen article, however, ignores the vindications of the no-rate strategy.

First, the government has drastically cut its hit list of 1986/87 ratecapped councils. A few months ago ministers boasted of 40 authorities being added to this year's 18. Jenkin's announcement last week revealed only 12 ratecapped victims in all — a result of the non-compliance strategy.

Second, the government has backed down on 'derogation'. Last year Jenkin reserved the powers to cut ratecap levels still further if councils appealed for a reassessment of the government's grant funding. Following a refusal by Labour councils to indulge in derogation the powers reserved by Jenkin for 1986-87 have been reduced, at least in relation to government's money for boroughs taking over the services of abolished metropolitan authorities.

Third, Lambeth's own position has been helped by non-compliance. Increased housing subsidy and reduced government penalties contributed about £7m to Lambeth, allowing the council to pass a £130m budget involving no cuts and no job losses for 1985/86.

Next year the position of Lambeth and other ratecapped councils looks much worse: the government's abandonment of targets has been replaced by tougher denial of the block grant to Labour councils.

That means £80,000 local authority jobs lost throughout Britain. If the *New Statesman* has not got the stamina for a second spate of non-compliance, what is its policy? Let us hope that unlike the 1983 general election, you are not advocating a vote for the Alliance in the 1986 local elections.

Swings and. . .

Prof. Gordon Reece, University of Bristol

It seems that I owe Peter Kellner an apology. He did not do the sums wrong: he just did the wrong sums.

When I ran the McKie method (Letters 19 July) my computer printed out the following results: in Blaenau Gwent, Michael Foot's popularity was such that the Conservatives achieved the remarkable figure of -562 votes, while in the Rhondda the number of negative Conservative votes reached 2000. Not even the most exotic voting activities of the Northern Irish have yet caused results quite so striking.

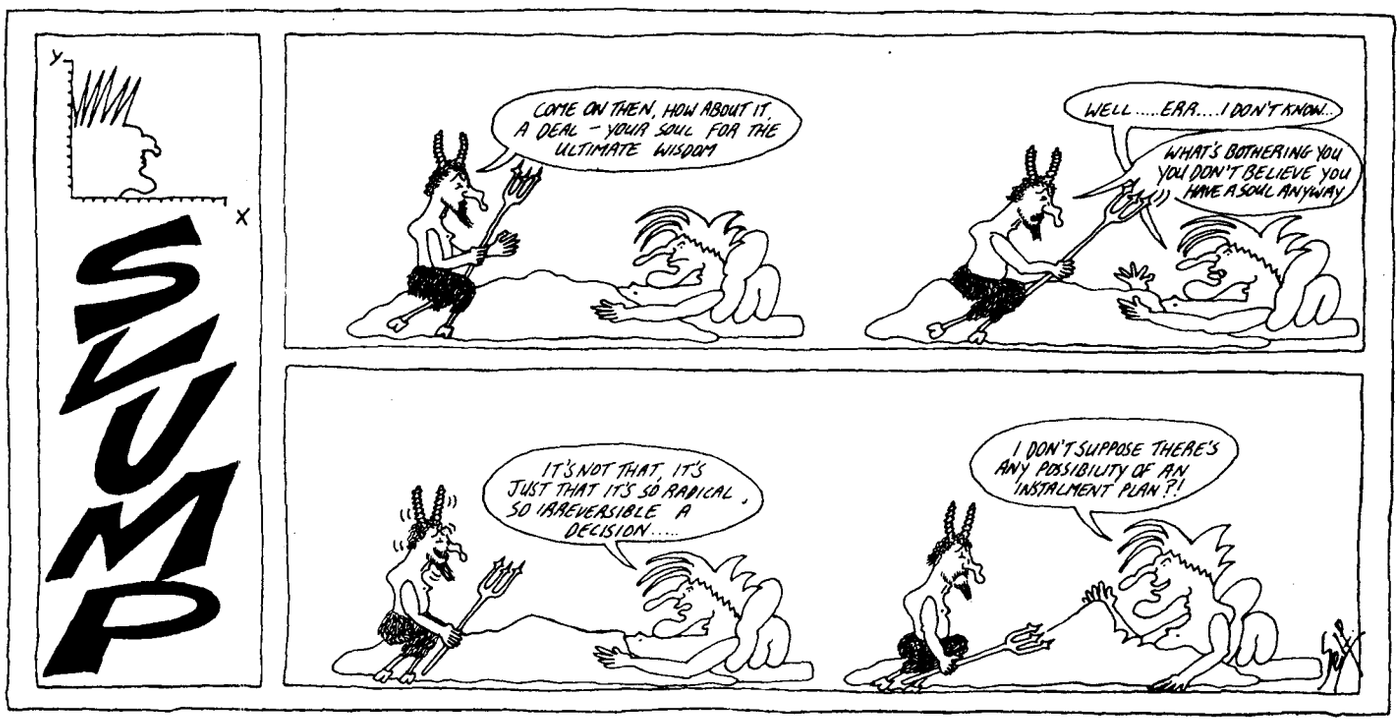
It might seem that the odd few negative votes don't matter, but they are only the most extreme examples of the fact that the swing method systematically steals votes from the losers (in this case the Conservatives) where they can spare them — in hopeless seats — and hands them back where they desperately need them, as in Kingston.

If we take the Gallup poll of 18 July, where the Conservatives scored 27.5%, the swing says that wherever the Conservatives took less than 16% in 1983, they will get a negative score, and that they will lose their deposit if they had less than 28.5%. By assuming that the Conservatives would lose 16 points everywhere, even if they only had 12 last time, the swing neatly conceals the extent of the damage at the other end, where the Conservatives had over 50%.

If the swing method were an adequate description of voting behaviour, it would imply that where a constituency was arbitrarily divided up, the voters would suddenly have to change their behaviour according to the local percentages polled by the various parties, even if the voters had no idea what those percentages were. In an area with only 16% Conservatives, all the Conservatives would abandon their party, while in the neighbouring area perhaps only one in five would do so.

Something very much like this would have to happen at local elections, especially when ward boundaries are redrawn. It does not happen: the PLH has been used with reasonable success (in 1984 we correctly forecast the result of every ward in Bristol and Bath) where the swing method would not necessarily have worked.

McKie claims that the swing method gave good results in 1983 without using regional variations. But there were enormous regional variations: McKie must have been incredibly lucky. The PLH, by contrast, gets steadily more accurate as more information becomes available.


Y
X
SUMP
COME ON THEN, HOW ABOUT IT, A DEAL - YOUR SOUL FOR THE ULTIMATE WISDOM
WELL.....ERR....I DON'T KNOW...
WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU YOU DON'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE A SOUL ANYWAY
IT'S NOT THAT, IT'S JUST THAT IT'S SO RADICAL, SO IRREVERSIBLE A DECISION.....
I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S ANY POSSIBILITY OF AN INSTALMENT PLAN?!

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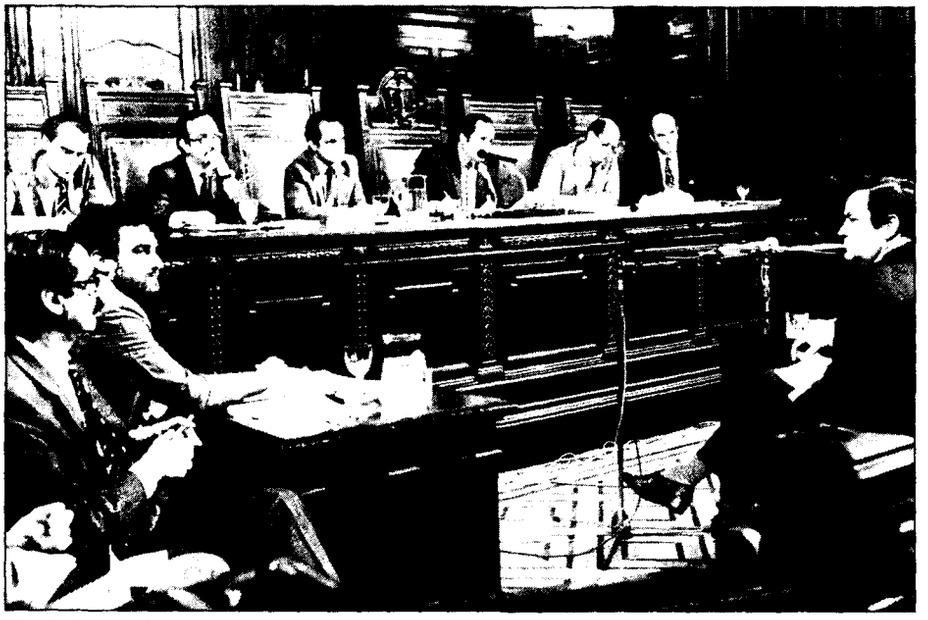

The judges sit for up to 12 hours at a time, hearing the victims' accounts of their torture

THEY SAW NO EVIL

In his second article on Argentina's torturers, COLM TOIBIN tells of the denial of what happened: the priest who swears he saw nothing; the torturers who later warmly greeted their victims; the middle classes who even now would turn their backs

SOMETIMES IT GETS too much; sometimes you can't stay in there for more than an hour at a time listening to them tell what happened; sometimes you feel an urgent need to get the hell out of there. The court sits from three o'clock in the afternoon until late into the night; last Wednesday the court did not rise until four o'clock in the morning.

Outside is the city of Buenos Aires. Hints of summer still linger in the soft late autumn. Across the square from the court is the Teatro Colon, the city's luscious nineteenth centry opera house, where the Argentine soprano Adelaida Negri is bringing down the house in a stunning production of *Norma*. Elsewhere Robert de Niro and Meryl Streep are having a love affair with a suburban train. Then there are the tearooms, the huge comfortable bars, the late night cinemas, the restaurants where the best steak in the world is served. The city is clean, rich, comfortable. The main streets are wide and crawling with taxis; the side streets on block after block are full of expensive shops where you don't get a shirt for less that $30. The city has turned its back on the huge harbour; the city has spread itself away from the Rio de la Plata; the city has modelled itself on Milan, on Madrid.

Sometimes you wander around the city just to get away from what is happening in the court. Sometimes you don't want to hear any more about the time they took the students from the Arts Faculty in, selected one of them called Sergio and tortured him so badly that he lay there for days dying, and they brought the other students in to look at him and told them that if they didn't talk they would be tortured like Sergio was and left there on the metal grill to die.

Sometimes you don't want to hear any more. The man taken in with his wife and held together blindfolded for days and days, all they can hear is the sound of screaming from the torture rooms until one night they recognise the screams, their son is being tortured, the son who was dragged from the house three weeks earlier. Until that moment they did not know he was in the prison with them, they never heard him scream again and they never saw him again and they can only guess what happened to him. Some time later their other son was taken in; they have never seen him since either.

After six or seven days their blindfolds were taken off and what they saw they could not believe: all of the torturers and the prison staff were less than 25 years old.

You walk through the city with the images of the day in your head: the capuchin monk being tortured with the electric cattle prod and the torturers roaring 'Where is God now? What can God do to help you?' The prisoners shot in reprisal for the terrorist bombing of a police station and their bodies left all over the city at random. The obelisk is the main monument in the city; it was here right in the heart of the city at the height of the murdering that they took six prisoners in the middle of the night and shot them.

Each street name now has a certain resonance: the route the prisoners were taken on; the house they were arrested in; where they were released, the lucky ones. Slowly you get to know the city through walking around and through the names mentioned in the court. Slowly the names of the tram stops into the city from San Isidro where you are staying take on a resonance too. *Olivos* is where the priest from Venezuela spent the day trying to get exit documents for the five Forti boys aged between seventeen and eight who, with their mother, were dragged from an airplane by the security forces. Their mother was never seen again. *Martinez* is where one of the worst detention centres was situated. *Belgrano* is where Edgardo Sajon's wife was told that she couldn't make a statement about her husband's disappearance, that he had probably left her, maybe they weren't getting on, they told her.

For many people now the city of Buenos Aires is a nightmare. Fernando Alvez still has marks on his left foot from June 1977 when they tied it to a cable and turned on the current. About a year ago he saw the man who tortured him from a bus. He got off and followed him. He walked along after him. He didn't know what to do and stopped when the man went into the house about a block away from where he stood. Jorge Alega, who was badly tortured by both Julian El Turco and Colores, met Colores in the street. Alega froze with fear but Colores seemed not to understand this and asked him how he was getting on, how his work was going and gave him a phone number (458836) in case he was ever in any trouble. Alega later phoned the number and asked for Colores; he was told he was busy but if he could ring back in about an hour.

For Alega the city didn't stop spewing up reminders of his year in detention. He met Julian El Turco on the street as well and was also greeted warmly. A guard from the detention centre moved into a flat in the same building. Julian El Turco began to telephone him first at his parents' house

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and later at his flat. He proposed that they might consider going into business together.

SOME PEOPLE BROKE under torture and told them what they wanted to know. Grasiella Trotte told them where they could find her husband and child and they took her with them when they went to get him; they left the child on the side of the road to be picked up by neighbours. One girl from the Arts faculty of the university gave them her boyfriend's address and they came back that night and told her that they had gone there and murdered him.

The third week of the trial was dominated by the following names. The names became like a chant in a Brian Friel play as each person listed them out; Liliana Garlaza, Pablo and Maria Magdelena Mainer, Domingo Moncalvillo, Martin Groeber, Susana de Salamone, Lidia Idiart and Maria Moretini.

Last seen November 1977.

All of them arrested late in 1976. All of them held under extraordinary circumstances. They were all tortured in the early days of their captivity. They were all professional people, doctors, teachers, engineers, and if the hints of the court by parents and other witnesses can be treated seriously then they all either belonged to or supported the terrorist group the Monteneros. It looks as though they all broke under torture. Their parents were told that they could visit them any time, two of the women had babies during their time in prison and the babies were handed over to the grandparents. The parents were told that they were being detained for their own protection.

Two men's names figure in everyone's evidence: Fredrico Assis and Christain Von Wernich. Assis ran the La Plata detention centre when these eight young people were held and Von Wernich was a police chaplain who saw a great deal of the young people.

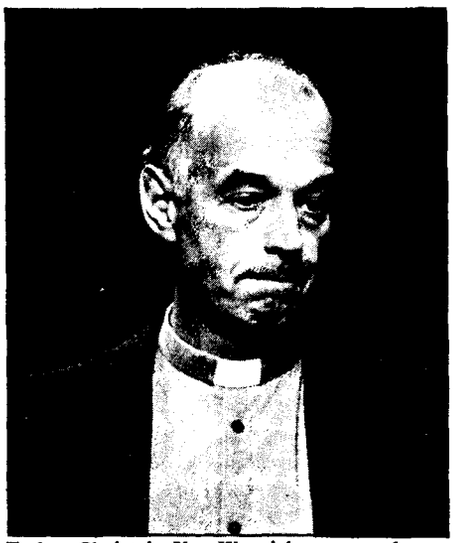
Several years ago evidence was given that Father Christain Von Wernich was in the room when these young people were shot in late November 1977; but this evidence has not been given before this tribunal so the truth is not known.

The following is clear. Towards the end of 1977 these eight young people believed that they were going to be allowed to leave the country. They asked their parents for money, they would need dollars in Uruguay where they believed they were going first. They asked their parents for passports. They asked for their certificates, degrees as they believed their exile was going to be long. The parents duly brought these. They gave them to the priest, who was going to look after them.

So that when the children disappeared, didn't write, when time went by, the parents appealed to Father Von Wernich and he told them not to give up hope, never to give up hope and that is eight years ago and they have nothing else to make them hope that they will ever see their children again.

The court awaited the entry of Father Christain Von Wernich with considerable interest.

He was tall, well-groomed, in his late forties. He explained how he came across a number of young people who were in detention and he offered them spiritual help and comfort. ('I offered them my spiritual services'.) They had doubts, they had problems, they had fears, he said. He could not talk about what physical state they were in as he had only considered their spiritual state. He spoke with the utmost gravity. There was no torture, his



Father Christain Von Wernich: over and over he used the images and language of the Catholic church to sidestep questions about how these prisoners came to be murdered

voice became angry and he clenched his fists; in all those years when he worked for the police he never heard of a prisoner being tortured. It is something he would never have tolerated.

Did he know Fredrico Assis? There was silence for a moment. The angry voice denouncing torture had gone. Several witnesses had given evidence that they were tortured by Assis. Did he know Assis? He began to talk about the Catholic church and what an important and loving name Assisi is for members of the church. The judge looked puzzled: did he know a man named Fredrico Assis? No, said Von Wernich, who was a chaplain in the detention centre run by Assis as well as in others. He would always remember a name like Assis.

He found the young people were all going to leave the country and he counselled them on the perils of living abroad. He did not seem to understand the laughter in the court at this. He talked to them, he said, about the things they might miss if they went to Uruguay or Brazil. (The judge said he would clear the court if there was any further noise.) He remembers it was November, because it was the month of the Virgin in Argentina, and he went on to tell of the importance of the Virgin and the month of the Virgin in his own life and the life of the church. Over and over he used the images and language of the Catholic church to sidestep questions about how these prisoners came to be murdered.

They all left the country, he swore, at the end of November, some by land, some by air. He saw them all off. He remembers the details. No, he cannot remember the name of a single person who came with them although he agrees there was a driver as well as several members of the security forces. No, he cannot even remember what any of these people looked like. Nor what sort of car.

There is no record of any of these people leaving the country on the date specified or on any other date. Father Von Wernich still thinks the parents shouldn't give up hope.

ON 25 MAY, there is big news. All the newspapers have it as the lead story; radio and television are going to town on it. By the end of the week every single magazine in the country will have the story on the cover. Norma Aleandre has won the Best Actress Award at Cannes for her part in the all-Argentine film *La Historia Oficial*. She plays the part of a woman who slowly begins to discover that her adopted daughter was stolen from a woman taken in by the security forces.

There are hundreds of missing children in Argentina, toddlers taken in with their parents and never seen again, babies born to mothers in prison and snatched away. Some of these were murdered, but others were taken home by childless policemen or prison officers, or handed over to right-wing groups. They are now being brought up by these people. There is a body now working solely to get these kids back.

La Historia Oficial was doing okay until Cannes and then all hell broke loose. All the seats are numbered and you have to book days in advance. It is eleven o'clock now on Saturday night in Calle Lavelle, one of the two or three most fashionable streets in the centre of Buenos Aires. The foyer of the cinema is absolutely packed and resembles nothing as much as a fashion show. These are the Argentinian middle classes, famed in song and story, come to see their compatriot who made it in France.

They've all been to France. In the 1970s the entire population of Argentina, all 28 million of them, travelled all over the world. When an airplane came back from Europe to Argentina another one came

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behind with all the goods the people in the first plane had bought. This is called, with regret now and bitterness, *la epoca de la plata dulce*, the age of the sweet money, when the national debt rose to $45 billion, almost $2000 per man, woman and child in the country, when the peso, the national currency, was kept artificially high, so that if your money wouldn't buy much in Buenos Aires, it would be worth a fortune in New York, or Paris, France.

The middle classes wish they could have the good times back again and they have little interest in the trial of the generals for grave breaches of human rights. It's the last thing Argentina needs, everyone I meet tell me this.

Eleven o'clock Saturday night. Silence. Lights down. *La Historia Oficial* is about to begin. Well-known scenes from the landscapes of Argentina appear on the screen and the audience stands up for the national anthem. They know every word, they sing it out loud and clear, dead serious, no slouchers. The movie opens with a small parody of this, but no one seems to notice.

The movie has a tug-of-war over a child, a beautiful woman, some nice houses and nice clothes. It can't go wrong, they love it. It would be easy to watch it without having to think about the events in Argentina in the late 1970s.

No one wants to think about this. The trial will go on and convict some of the generals and lock them up. But many people seem set against knowing what happened, many don't even believe that anything occurred. And the longer the trial goes on the less interest there will be.

Anything could happen here again. And there is no evidence that people this time would do something to stop it. There is no evidence that what happened to the Forti boys, five of them aged between seventeen and eight, when they were released from detention would not happen again in Buenos Aires.

They were left blindfolded on the side of a main street in Buenos Aires with their hands tied. The police car sped away. Their mother had been murdered in the previous few days; their father had gone to Venezuela, they had been arrested in the airplane. At first they were not aware that they were being watched by the entire clientele of a bar who all stood at the window gazing out. No one left the bar. The boys took time to untie each other and take off the blindfolds. They looked behind and saw the bar but still no one came out. A man was walking towards them but when he saw them he turned back. They had never been in Buenos Aires before, but they picked themselves up and tried to walk along even though they had to idea where they were going. □

This article first appeared in Dublin.

Far Eastern reflections

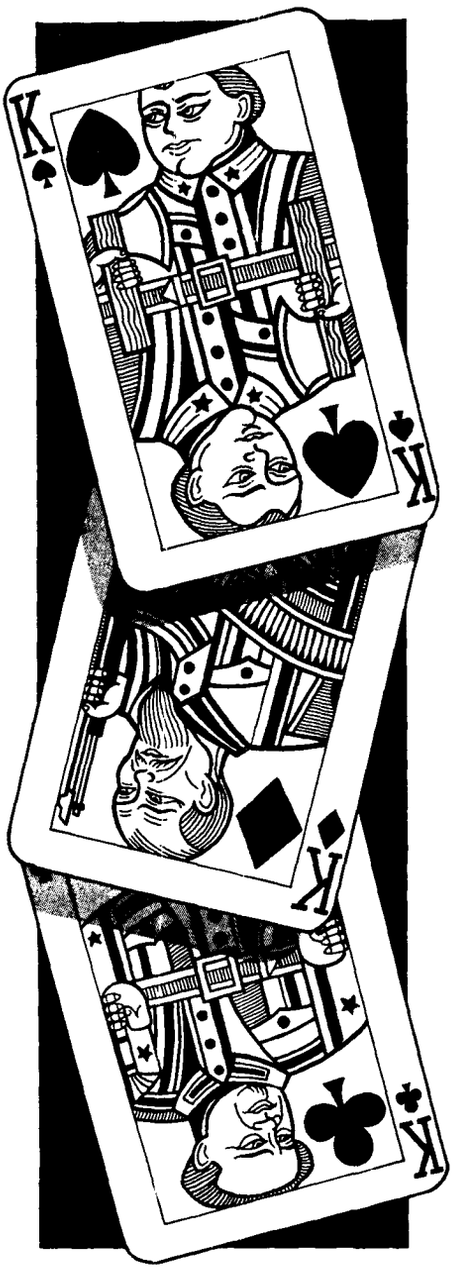
Fred Halliday

How Pol Pot Came to Power
BEN KIERNAN *Verso* £30 & £9.95
A Mirror for Socialism: Soviet Criticisms of China
GILBERT ROZMAN *I.B. Tauris* £29.50

IN THE POST-1945 ERA, the Far East has had a special prominence in the global spread of revolution and in the attempts to build post-revolutionary societies based on socialism. This region has seen the most momentous triumphs — the Chinese revolution, emancipating a quarter of mankind, in 1949, followed by the protracted, heroic and ultimately victorious resistance of Vietnam against French and later American intervention. This is the region of the world where there have been the greatest popular upheavals and where, in the wars of Korea and Vietnam, Third World forces have inflicted the most telling defeats on metropolitan armies. In the recent anniversary commemorations, the crimes of the US in Indo-China were, by a process of collective McEnroe-ism, turned into a lament about what Vietnam did to 'us', the aggressor. But such attempts by the United States to avoid the consequences of the Vietnamese victory only testify to the enduring and monumental achievement of Ho, Giap and their people.

Beyond these triumphs, however, and the terrible sufferings they involved, there lies a darker history, one that must trouble all who believe in the possibility of socialism and in the need for revolutionary mobilisation against foreign intervention and domestic tyrannies. For, if it was the calamities of the Stalin period in the 1930s — the repression of the peasantry and working class, as well as the purges themselves — that posed these questions most acutely in the pre-war period, it is the fate of the post-revolutionary societies in the Far East that has posed, and continues to pose, them for the contemporary generation. The Chinese revolution has generated the frenzies of the cultural revolution, in which hundreds of thousands, if not millions, lost their lives, the cult of Mao and, more recently, the virtual capitulation of that most nationalist and hitherto self-reliant people to the designs of foreign business and western strategy. The Korean regime has produced the most extreme personality cult of this century, in the veneration of Kim Il-sung, and a degree of regimentation unmatched anywhere else in the socialist bloc. Indo-China has produced the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime, between 1975 and 1979. In the international domain, Russia and China on one front, Vietnam and Cambodia on a second, China and Vietnam on a third, have given us a series of wars and border clashes between revolutionary regimes, sustained and embroidered with violent polemics and abuse between former allies.

There is much here to face up to, and understand, and it is the merit of these two books by, respectively, Australian and



Cliff Harper

American academics, that they provide fascinating, well-researched and measured studies of aspects of the revolutionary processes in the Far East. Free of cold war diversions or apologetic evasions, both books are models of judgment and scholarship.

Ben Kiernan knows the Cambodian language and has spent many months talking to Cambodians, inside their country and abroad, in the period since 1979. For the historian, the tragedy of the Cambodian revolution provides a unique opportunity since the documents, the interviews, the defectors and the participants are, when they survive, available to a degree never found when the first revolutionaries remain in power. What Kiernan has done, through painstaking reconstruction, is to write a history of Cambodian Communism from its beginnings in the nationalist milieu of the

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interwar period through to the capture of Phnomh Penh in 1975. It is a rich, gruesome and compelling tale.

Among the many factors which Kiernan adduces to explain the character of the Khmer Rouge regime, some are given particular attention. One is the way in which the very retarded character of French colonialism in Cambodia, where education was far less developed than in Vietnam, produced a 'sociological explosion' in the 1920s and beyond, as young people finally did get an education and became consumed with a desire to transform and emancipate their country.

Kiernan also elucidates what was long obscure in the 1950s and 1960s, namely the degree to which, under the surface of a tranquil Sihanouk-ruled Cambodia, sharp political conflicts were developing. The Khmer Rouges may now be in alliance with Sihanouk, but it was his suppression of the left-wing forces who helped defeat the French in the early 1950s that bred the particularly hard Communist core that developed into the Pol Pot regime.

Of equal importance was the impact of regional factors and in particular the tragic and contradictory relationship of the guerrilla movements in Vietnam and Cambodia. From the moment in 1954 when Vietnamese Communists came to power in Hanoi and their counterparts were forced underground in Cambodia, a rivalry developed which was fuelled by the atmosphere of febrile Cambodian nationalism. In 1973 when the Vietnamese signed a peace agreement with the USA, and enabled Washington to turn the full force of its air power on to Cambodia, the stage was set for the later war between the Cambodian and Vietnamese regimes.

What Kiernan has done is to provide that internal political dimension of the Cambodian story that can now be matched with studies already available on the international history of the war. His book lacks adequate analysis of the social and economic situation in Cambodia, within which to locate his political story, and his attention to personalities and regions could profitably have been matched by some analytic summaries and signposts. These are, however, secondary complaints about what, in every other respect, is a masterpiece of revolutionary historiography.

Gilbert Rozman's study covers Soviet writing on China in the period from the Sino-Soviet split of 1963 until the suspension of Soviet publishing on this subject with the slight thaw between the two states in 1982. He shows that, for all its obvious limitations, Soviet writing on China is worth reading carefully — for what it tells us about China itself, and in particular about classes and the problems of the transition to socialism, but also for what it tells us about the Soviet Union. He sees the literature as containing two schools — an orthodox, Brezhnevite current, that is opposed to relaxation of political and economic controls, and a reform current, that draws from the Chinese experience lessons in support of liberalisation in the Soviet Union itself.

Much of the Soviet discussion about China is about voluntarism and caution — how far revolutionary regimes can transform their countries, how resistant attitudes, regions, classes are to change, how dangerous the

Cliff Harper

forcible acceleration of reforms can be. The analysis to which Rozman draws attention is part of a much wider one about revolution in the Third World and its problems, a discussion evident in Soviet caution about changes in Ethiopia, South Yemen, Cuba during the Guevarist experiments of the 1960s and, of course, Afghanistan.

Rozman suggests that the criticisms Soviet writers make of China are, implicitly, like those Western writers make of both the USSR and the PRC. This is the most superficial part of his study. 'Western' writers on these countries cover a wide range of assessment, from the serious to the deranged, but the majority of them accept neither the legitimacy of revolution nor the need to preserve the bases of the new social system. The most interesting aspect of this Soviet writing on China is that it is critical but located within this framework.

China serves as a multi-faceted mirror for Soviet writers. There is one mustachioed visage which must stare out of the mirror, whose influence was enormous in China, but whom Soviet writers cannot to this day discuss seriously, namely Stalin. The vision of factionalism, political murder and economic chaos of the 1960s is easy to look at, for cautionary purposes. What is perhaps most intriguing is how Soviet observers now view the economic liberalisation in China. For Gorbachev, the Chinese mirror may contain a threat, or a model, or both. □

Noisome

Mervyn Jones

The Pick of Paul Johnson
PAUL JOHNSON *Harrap* £9.95

READING THIS BOOK has been a tormenting experience. I don't say this because of any antipathy to the writer; I enjoy being at the receiving end of Paul Johnson's prose, in spite of — or quite often because of — his violent prejudices and his bizarre view of the world. He expresses himself with impeccable clarity, eschews jargon and is precise and thoughtful in his choice of words; few writers with a large and regular output can claim these merits. Admittedly, reading these collected pieces at a stretch can become tedious, but that isn't Paul Johnson's fault, since they were written to be read as they appeared in the *Spectator* or the *Daily Telegraph*.

The blame for the torment rests solely with the publisher, who has produced the book in a form that can only be called disgraceful. The paper is grey. The layout of the pages is mean and ugly, with narrow margins and the minimum of space at the top and bottom. The type is nasty, and pervaded by oddities such as the use of acute accents for quotation marks. The whole effect recalls the appearance of books in the wartime and early post-war years, when there was an acute paper shortage. In those days, however, at least they got the actual words right.

The words that have not been got right in this production, noted as I went through my suffering, make up a formidable list. Affrontery, beedy-eyed, accolate, wordly (for 'worldly', the context indicates), gallaxy, scintilating, umbillical, harrassed, portentious, metalurgy, computor, critized, wrily, subpoened, laudible, gaity, innoculated, preventitive, dediction (apparently for 'dedication', not 'deduction'), squalour, ephermeral, double-died, absorbtion, solitarity (apparently for 'solitary', not 'solidarity'), decrepid, noisesome, prophesy (as a noun), plebian, womenly, harrangue, distintegration, reitterate and majoram. Also these names of people or places: Westminister, Churchil, Ebeneezer, Aubery Singer, Clancy Segal, Saltzburg, Sienna, Peacocke, Spezzia, Helas, Montherland, Woolfit, Anapolis and Van Dyke.

It's possible that some of these errors originated with the writer (though, as I remember his vigilant scrutiny of *New Statesman* page proofs, not many). Writing to a deadline, he may have forgotten, for instance, the unusual spelling of Clancy Sigal's name. But, in book publishing, such lapses are supposed to be corrected by a person called the copy editor. It's the copy editor, not the writer, who is required to possess no other skill and perform no other duty than that of ensuring accuracy, and is paid considerably more than a teacher or a nurse for doing so. Traditionally, when books are replete with blunders, reviewers sternly rebuke the author for failing to read the proofs. Nowadays, even if a writer reads the proof with scrupulous care (in unpaid time, of course), nobody in the production department takes any notice.

Indeed, it's worse than that. The evidence indicates that many of the errors are not merely overlooked, but inserted, by copy editors. An example in my list is the word 'noisesome'. There is no such word in the dictionary, but there is such a word as 'noisome'. It means 'harmful'; it derives from the Norman-French *noy*, which is also the root of the verb 'to annoy'; and it has nothing to do with noise. I'm pretty sure that Paul Johnson wrote 'noisome', since he was referring to the heart of a dead man, a silent object if ever there was one. 'Noisesome'

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can only be the creation of an officious, ignorant copy editor, too lazy to think about the sense of the passage, make a phone call to the writer or consult the dictionary.

This book was designed, typeset and printed in Britain. Books which are a pleasure to read, increasingly and by now almost invariably, are produced in Hong Kong. I hope that the agreement between Mrs Thatcher and Deng Xiao-Ping includes a provision for this system to continue when the place passes into the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China. Otherwise, I don't know what we shall do. □

Mythguided

Nigella Lawson

Feminist Aesthetics
ed. GISELA ECKER *The Women's Press*
£9.95 & £4.95

'ALL INVESTIGATIONS into art have to be thoroughly genderized,' states Gisela Ecker in her introduction to this collection of essays by 11 German feminists. This sentence would dismay many practising artists. At its most comprehensive level, the feminist movement represents a fight against being defined by our sex; why should we now lay, and fall into, the same trap ourselves?

This is not to say that there is no place for the positing of a feminist aesthetic or establishing what one might be. One of the most pervasive myths about 'great art' is that it is universal. Feminist criticism has worked to expose the fallaciousness of such an assumption. A woman would read the opening of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Henchard's selling of his wife and daughter) very differently from a man (although Irving Howe describes it as representing 'our common fantasies'). A Marxist critic would point out that those paintings of rural scenes (peasants tilling the ground etc.) of which the Victorians were so fond, seeing in them the glorious rural idyll, would engender a quite different response in a person who might do the tilling. Similarly, the patiently sewing women whom Vermeer painted might not represent, for a woman, the gentle contentment of the domestic virtues that many male critics have blithely seen in them. How many films have you seen in which the happy ending involves, among other things, getting the girl? And what about Cliff Richard's 'Got myself a crying, walking, sleeping, talking, living doll'? A feminist perspective aims to expose the bias that lies behind so many of our cultural activities. It is not a case of special pleading.

Stating the obvious can be met with remarkable resistance, however, and the eminently sensible observations of many feminist critics have often not been paid the respect or indeed the attention they demand. Those critics will not thank such writers as are included in this book who tell us that the sonata is a 'male form'; that feminist architects should not design buildings in which men or nuclear families are to live; that women should establish a 'matriarchal aesthetic' based on an 'ethos of magic'. Half the essays in this volume do a great disservice and are frankly an embarrassment to women and the women's movement.

The book was conceived, however, not to serve as a blueprint but as an indication of the debate going on within the feminist movement in Germany. Care has been taken to select essays which take into account as wide a range of views as possible. And not all by far share the 'womanism' of the writers quoted above. Women necessarily have different experiences of life from men, as Silvia Bovenschen admits in 'Is There a Feminist Aesthetic', but the difference 'cannot be in the sense of mere inversion'. Other writers in this collection, too, stress the dangers of polarising the sexes. Gisela Breitling, in the final (well-worth waiting for) essay, 'Speech, Silence and the Discourse of Art' warns against 'the ghetto of the feminine', the grouping together of women when they might have nothing in common with each other except for their sex.

No artist benefits from being judged in an exclusively female context: denying one's cultural inheritance, even if this inheritance is based on the oppression of one's own sex, is a misguided act. Art may take into account, but not be subsumed by, ideology. □

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MAGAZINES

Reincarnations

David Berry

WE LIVE IN mysterious times. Not only is a government whose economic policy is rooted in arcane 19th-century theory presenting itself as *the* administration of the micro-chip age, but the *Spectator* is currently being advertised as the magazine of 'good writing'.

The *Spectator*? The trouble is, it's true. The weekly magazine of the literate Right, which should surely have collapsed 20 years ago, is now as much required reading as *Marxism Today*, that other dinosaur whose day, it once appeared, had long past. Mysterious times indeed.

Ten years ago, both these magazines were struggling for life and the most interesting ideas, and the best writing on politics and culture, were emerging from a range of periodicals that all owed some sympathy to the Left and some commitment to radical change outside the socialist political parties.

Now, instead of the *Leveller*, we have the *New Socialist*; instead of *Undercurrents*, there is *Resurgence*; instead of a *Private Eye* with room for Paul Foot, we have a money-spinning venture dominated by that *Spectator* groupie Richard Ingrams.

Whatever merits magazines like the *New Socialist* have (and there are many), literary style is not among them. But then that could have been said of the *Leveller* as well.

But the important thing about the 1970s radical press was that it challenged the conventional notions of 'good writing' and put a premium on ideas that were passionate and were rooted in personal experience and in disgust at the orthodox political scene.

The *Leveller*'s heirs are thin on the ground these days but the memory of the magazine was evoked by two new periodicals in the last few months.

Traces (40p, 25 Floral St, London WC2 9DS) is a monthly magazine set up, one suspects, to keep the *Leveller*'s 'left-wing but non-aligned' policy alive. A recent issue contains an article which almost predicted the Stonehenge carnage and pieces on MI5, George Medley and feminist science fiction.

It's a good mix but *Traces* can't quite escape the new writer's obsession with explaining the journalistic process, an obsession that occasionally bedevils the otherwise excellent *City Limits*. Only experienced writers like several of the *Spectator*'s columnists can bring this off without exasperating the reader's patience.

Everywoman (60p, The Galleries, Camden Passage, London N1 8EA) is a new monthly magazine produced by an all-women collective and aimed at women. It's the one magazine that I've seen in the last couple of years that has the professionalism and fun of the old *Leveller*, although enthused by a feminist rather than a socialist commitment.

Issue number four contains news and feature articles on the Powell Bill, worker co-ops and outsize clothes and the writing is fresh and confident, not as polished as yet as the *Spectator* but writing that informs, occasionally infuriates and often makes one smile. It's a magazine which, I hope, is here to stay.

It is highly unlikely that **Resurgence** (£1.50, Worthyvale Manor Farm, Camelford, Cornwall PL32 9TT) will ever fold, at least not until the new millennium, since the bi-monthly magazine which promotes ecological and 'small is beautiful' messages is on its 110th issue.

But *Resurgence* has now 'incorporated' *Undercurrents*, the radical science magazine which, to my mind, was *the* magazine of the 1970s libertarian Left.

The result is a publication which is well-written and ranges wide: a recent issue has features on 'computer control' and thick frost in Wales. But it's all a little mystical for my taste and misses the bite of the old *Undercurrents*. I guess I can't take seriously a publication with pretty pictures of fish and chickens and adverts for 'Beyond the Body: the Festival of Spirit'.

A brief mention for a new journal, **Free Associations** (26 Freegrove Road, London N7), which really deserves an extended review by itself. *Free Associations* is a quarterly collection of articles on 'psychoanalysis, groups, politics and culture' and was first launched last year as a special issue of the *Radical Science Journal*.

To anyone who believes that Freud and Klein are as relevant to radical thinking as Marx and Lenin, Free Associations is essential if, at £5.50, a little expensive reading. □

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Shorter reviews

Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet
PAUL ZWEIG *Viking* £14.95

As well as being an exceedingly good book, *Walt Whitman: The Making of the Poet* is a new kind of book: part biography, part criticism, part cultural history; inward, chatty and forceful; and not afraid to be rude about its subject, or impressed or perplexed by it. The form, rolling, compendious and vigorous, is an echo of Whitman himself, and it copes with him where — Zweig argues — the criticism and biography of this century have largely broken down: 'Here is the baffling, often irritating fact of Whitman's temperament: that he was a hack and yet was also America's most original poet.'

What Zweig does is not to discount one version or the other nor to take refuge in irritating and irritated paradoxes, but to show the interdependence of the poet and the 'drab, excitable journalist'. Some of the descriptive prose turns up years later, re-worked many times, in *Leaves of Grass*. The mixture of writing from experience and from written sources — of which Paul Zweig turns up a fascinating variety — is like journalism; the habit of giving opinions in an editorial voice that is louder than any individual's; writing with a moral purpose; a fascination with the technology of printing, and using newspapers to promote his poetry and himself (Whitman wrote numerous reviews of his books, anonymously, and puffed himself in short 'fillers'); even the conventional piety of many of his beliefs and opinions, where Melville and Poe and others in the 'American Renaissance' of the 1850s were far more unorthodox.

The dichotomy of poet and journalist is only one in a whole series that Zweig identifies in Whitman, ranging over the topics of literacy, health, education, sexuality, music, religion and many more. Put at its simplest, *Leaves of Grass* started off as 'a bristling anti-literary statement', a sort of non-book by a non-writer who left his name off the title page but included an engraving from a photograph of himself and began with the 50-odd pages of 'Song of Myself'. An act of self-creation, says Zweig, a 'therapeutic epic'. It is an illuminating reading that makes available again the work of a man whose character and propensities are now so unlike our own: 'He unhoused himself with glee, turning geology, astronomy, and all the turbulence of his age into a stage set for the immense self.'

Michael Hofmann

The Craft of Literary Biography
ed. JEFFREY MEYERS *Macmillan* £22.50

The essays collected here mainly belong, like the *Writers at Work* interviews, to the appealing species of higher gossip. Of the 13 contributors, 11 largely tell the stories behind one of their biographies. Practical rather than theoretical matters dominate: how the subject was chosen, the research undertaken, the material shaped. The exceptions are Donald Greene, who previews the anti-Boswellian thrust of his forthcoming account of Johnson's later years, and Frederick R. Karl, who considers the use of 'psychobiographical' techniques in relation to Conrad. All 13, though, unite in rejecting what Meyers calls the 'superficial school' of biography, which eschews 'sympathetic intuition', presenting instead 'an external view through an encyclopedic accumulation of facts'.

The most interesting passages concern authorial travails, notably those occurring at the research stage. Predictably enough, unauthorised biographers like Lyndall Gordon (*Eliot's Early Years*) and Nigel Hamilton (*The Brothers Mann*) met with obstacles while fact-gathering, but even officially-sanctioned writers experienced difficulties. Mark Holloway encountered a relative of Norman Douglas (his subject) who denied him access to the many family papers in her possession and then destroyed some of them before his eyes. Jeffrey Meyers lists the potential sources who ignored his enquiries about Wyndham Lewis. Philip Knightley's problem lay less in obtaining information for his life of T.E. Lawrence than in obtaining clearance to use it: he records much dickering with assorted people whose approval was required before publication could take place. William M. Murphy, meanwhile, was surfeited with material: his biography of John Butler Yeats (W.B.'s father) originally comprised 700,000 words instead of the contracted 200,000. The disappointing things about the volume are that only Knightley, Ronald Hayman (Brecht) and Deirdre Bair (Beckett) discuss the question of authenticating evidence, while only Knightley and Meyers satisfy this reader's nosiness regarding biography's financial rewards.

David Montrose

Thatcher: The First Term
PATRICK COSGRAVE *Bodley Head* £9.95

Few politicians excite quite the same sort of extremes of emotion as does Mrs Thatcher or have influenced the political climate quite as much. Patrick Cosgrave, as adviser to her during her period as Opposition Leader, should be ideally placed to give an account of her first government. Indeed his two previous books on Mrs Thatcher did much to explode the myths that had grown up about her. Alas his account adds little. It is deferential as is to be expected from an admirer but lacks the merits his position should give him of inside information.

The best part of the book deals with her ideas and how Mrs Thatcher came to succeed Heath as Conservative leader. Cosgrave argues that in many respects her victory was not 'legitimate' but the product of her boldness and Airey Neave's cunning. Many Conservatives keen to prevent an outright Heath victory in the first ballot so as to push forward their own candidates in the second round found they had let the geni out of the bottle. It was this feeling of 'illegitimacy' which conditioned her first government and meant it was less radical than might have been supposed. Moreover, lacking in experience, she was forced to inherit Heath's old Cabinet.

If Mrs Thatcher came to power by backstairs intrigue she certainly caught the public imagination so that the 1979 election victory was the biggest Conservative swing in over 40 years. Cosgrave rightly stresses that if Thatcher owed much to gurus like Hayek and Hoskyns she benefited too from predecessors like Callaghan, a monetarist in reality if not rhetoric. Indeed, much of Heath's resentment was because she stole his clothes and made them fit.

While the chapters on Rhodesia and the Falklands suggest the author is still privy to inside information (though he no longer works in her private office) the book largely relies on well-known sources. Far too much prominence is given to Mrs Thatcher herself. She may have replaced Cabinet Government with Prime Ministerial Government but that does not mean that Tebbit and Joseph are also not part of the Thatcher equation.

There have been, and no doubt will be, many more appraisals of the Thatcher years. This stands as an undistinguished mid-term account.

Andrew Lownie

The Drugs Menace
MARY MANNING *Columbus* £8.95

'Only one in five heavy users of heroin and other opiate drugs is receiving treatment now, compared with one in two twelve years ago'; 'there is enough illicit heroin now coming into Britain to supply about 300,000 regular users'; 'At a time when there has been a four-fold increase in heroin smuggling, there has been an 11 per cent reduction in customs staff'. And the city of Liverpool does not have a drug dependence clinic: waiting lists for treatment for addicts can be anything up to six months, but 'a patient with a sexually transmitted disease can be treated immediately at a walk-in clinic in the city'.

Mary Manning's succinct and readable primer for parents begins with the statistics and argues for much more co-operation in the handling of the problems of young addicts at all levels, from government intervention to parental self-help groups. Almost incidentally along the way she puts forward some of the plainest reasons for the epidemic you could find. Tom Curran, deputy director of social services in the Wirral, says that 'The basic problem... is not drugs but adolescence... and lack of communication' in families. Dr A.J. Nicholi of the Harvard Medical School claims that English and American parents spend less time with their children than 'parents in any other nation in the world'.

The chief aim of this book is to provide the most useful information about drugs, addictive symptoms and where to get help. This it does with an admirable clarity, which ought to make it indispensable to parents of adolescents. There is a list of help and information services at the end, and Michael Meacher has contributed a constructive foreword, in which he argues for a long-overdue 'national policy to combat drug abuse', as distinct from the 'ragbag of policies mixed with precarious short-term funding such as is currently being offered by central government'.

Anne Smith

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FICTION

Ways of seeing

Geoff Dyer

Slow Homecoming
PETER HANDKE *Methuen* £9.95
Second Marriage
FREDERICK BARTHELME *Dent* £9.95
The Boys on the Rock
JOHN FOX *Arena* £1.95
Extra Credit
JEFF BLACK *Gay Men's Press* £4.95

THE NARRATOR of the second piece in Peter Handke's extraordinary triptych of fictions describes Edward Hopper as a 'painter who carried me away from mere opinions about painting'. **Slow Homecoming** works similarly: carrying you away from opinions about writing into the heart of a work that demands to be read on its own terms, even while itself struggling to define them.

The first piece, 'The Long Way Round', follows Valentin Sorger on his journey back to Europe and America from his research outpost in a remote Alaskan village on the edge of the Arctic circle. Sorger is working on a paper 'On Spatial Configuration' which seeks to explore the way 'that in every landscape consciousness gradually creates its own configuration'. His efforts to 'read the landscape and give an orderly account of his reading' recall Cezanne's labours and in the second piece, 'The Lesson of Mont-Sainte-Victoire', Sorger's creator makes a pilgrimage to Cezanne's beloved mountain. There he speaks of vanishing and dissolving into the landscape 'in pursuit of a dematerialised but substantial language'. And what does that mean? It means that in both pieces landscape is apprehended and articulated (described is utterly the wrong word) with a visionary intensity that overwhelms our urge for plot and character. (Quotes could give no sense of this.)

As Sorger returns to civilisation his sensitivity mounts to a pitch of expressionist delirium ('Thousands of eyes came glowing toward him') that is exhausting to read. The book as a whole, however, ends on a note of lyrical revelation with the gentle 'Child Story' which tells of the developing relationship between an adult (who resembles Sorger and the narrator of 'Sainte-Victoire') and his young daughter. Taken together the 'novels' in *Slow Homecoming* represent Handke's most mature fiction so far, amply justifying the claims that were made for him somewhat prematurely.

Most of the characters in Frederick Barthelme's **Second Marriage** spend their time ordering food they don't feel like eating. Henry is off his food because a few months after he and Theo buy a house in a smart suburb in America's new south, Theo asks him to move out so that his ex-wife can move in. He does as he's asked.

Henry is a graphic artist who rarely bothers going to work; his occupation and listlessness have an exact parallel in a narrative of fine-nibbed precision that gradually consumes its own momentum: so much so that I spent four days reading the last ten pages without any impatience. In a way the unruffled calm of Barthelme's text has begun to work against itself: when a hoover runs mutely over a carpet we begin to doubt if it's actually picking anything up.

If a paralysing abundance of consumer choice represents the logical end-point of a culture of self-gratification then in many ways Barthelme's novel marks a similar point in the development of a certain strain in American writing that is usually thought to be marked by economy of method but which may, in fact, represent the opposite. Take this sentence: 'Stibert's place was a couple of two-bedroom townhouse apartments converted into one, and it smelled like cinnamon and had a lot of furniture.' Nice, but is it understatement and economy or is it random selection from a multiplicity of equally random details? Writing of this kind has now reached the point where there are no imperatives sufficiently urgent to control or select what is said. Hence, perhaps, the flourishing state of the short story (take-away fiction?) in America where brevity provides exactly that control. Barthelme's writing (see also the stories in *Moon Deluxe*) demonstrates and expresses exactly this situation.

IT IS PROBABLY a mark of the work of genius that it unleashes a potential greater than it is capable of using up: of no writer is this more obviously true than J.D. Salinger. Close on 30 years after the publication of *The Catcher in The Rye* there is still enough life in the idiom tapped there by Salinger to fund a novel like John Fox's without leaving it cripplingly indebted.

The Boys on the Rock tells of the summer in which 16-year-old Billy's nagging doubts about his sexuality turn to emphatic affirmation in his first homosexual love affair. There are lots of finely judged touches as Billy becomes aware of his 'strangeness' without fully understanding it. Take this moment in the locker room: 'They caught sight of me looking at them as I went past and they smiled. . .I waved and smiled and they waved back. It's always kind of humid in there.' The love affair itself is depicted with great frankness and tenderness (Fox has the advantage of being able to avoid the problem that in heterosexual sex scenes you are inevitably writing for two audiences) but as Billy's infatuation gives way to the realisation that Al, his lover, is a bit of a jerk we are reminded that, while Billy's recognition of his homosexuality is liberating, it is inseparable from a larger and more gradual process of transformation. Let us hope that *Boys on the Rock* is widely read in schools as well as by an older public.

In **Extra Credit** Harper King is about to embark on a turbulent month in which he will begin a lot of affairs as well as getting into all sorts of scrapes with the other members of staff at the school where he teaches. An unflagging rate of jokes per page and incidents per chapter, assembled in a plot that never looks like doing anyone lasting damage, make Jeff Black's novel a marvellously slick and hugely enjoyable entertainment. One for the beach. □

DANCE

Sap rises

Stephanie Jordan

London Festival Ballet
Coliseum
Royal Ballet
Covent Garden
Ballet Rambert
Big Top, Battersea

LONDON FESTIVAL BALLET has been attracting audiences excited to measure the progress of Peter Schaufuss's directorship and his introduction of a new, lively repertoire and baby ballerinas. But his most useful achievement to date is the revival of Ashton's *Romeo and Juliet* (1955), the first Western version to use Prokofiev and hitherto solely (until 1965) in the repertoire of the Royal Danish Ballet.

What has been recalled from notes and film is a firmly based classical interpretation of the story that buds and flowers through its three acts from a tightly controlled, courtly and public opening on the streets of Verona to a final immense and private sorrow in the Capulet vault. The simplicity of spectacle may cause problems for audiences used to the Mantegnan splendour of the MacMillan/Georgiadis production for the Royal Ballet as, I am sure, will the sparsity of the character roles and *verismo* (no piles of corpses or wedding processions) that enliven MacMillan's choreography. For Peter Rice's set is uncomplicated, columns, plain staircases and a platform at the back of the stage — used to great effect for expanding and containing action — and Ashton concentrates on the adolescent lovers.

But the great virtue of the Ashton version is its dance content, the choreographer's close observation of the contours of the music, the surprising eroticism that arises from a classical, courtly base, the subtle modulation of the language as the work progresses. By Act III, when Prokofiev's tempos slow and his palette darkens, so has Ashton developed a freer choreographic language. Schaufuss and the 16-year-old Katherine Healy were the première couple but the major role of this ballet is Healy's: self-conscious and diminutive at the outset but, showing what she has learnt from Ashton's coaching, developing into a personality and dancer of some magnitude.

Christopher Bruce's *Land* touches on the theme of invasion, for which it invokes a desolate world of ragged survivors and partisans, not unlike Goya's *Disasters of War*, Walter Nobbe's bleak set a terrifying river estuary, its bank strewn with corpses. Without wishing to belittle Bruce's political conscience, it is true to say that the piece is most noteworthy for providing a new kind of opportunity in the LFB repertoire for those who aren't featured as stars and a panacea for the circus capers that riddle the rest of it.

In *Half the House*, the first of two new works

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for the **Royal Ballet**, Jennifer Jackson returns to concepts of symmetry though, judging from the Cavafy poem *Growing in Spirit* in the programme, I would guess that the point is sexual. Jackson has taken a fine score, Bartok's *Divertimento for Strings*, handsome backcloths by William Henderson — quiet, mottled pink shifting to brilliant jagged geometrical shapes — and sets in motion with no mean fluency an intriguing group of three pink, three blue couples and three soloists in plum and white. But, in a brave attempt to confound expectations, she merely mystifies, never reconciling the potential of her groupings or of Cavafy's theme with formal dance language. By the time Bartok's score ends, the piece has gone awry.

You'll probably hear more about Wayne Eagling's *Frankenstein, the Modern Prometheus*. If I mention that it is like attempting to play Mel Brooks or the *Rocky Horror Show* straight, that the designs are by Emanuel, that the characters include a gang of idealised punks, that Vangelis's music is monumentally trite, that the entire orchestra rises and later sinks on stage behind a ballroom scene of nightmare taffeta, and if I add that it certainly brought in a new audience (albeit the brilliantined lizards of Europe's Tinsel Town) who clapped, stood and raved, you will likewise be baffled if not outraged.

Without doubt, of the larger companies, it is **Ballet Rambert** which produces the most consistent, vigorous new work today. In North's *Light and Shade*, the dancers look attractively fleet and energetic though, more balletic than usual for North, the work runs on busily, oblivious to Stravinsky's nuances and oddities. The company was shown to best advantage in Alston's work this season, in the revival of his *Rainbow Ripples* and in his new *Dangerous Liaisons*. The latter seems more a consolidation of recent explorations than an example of the jolting experimentation that has characterised many of his recent works. But that is no criticism, for *Liaisons* is fearlessly fluent and as thrilling as the title, borrowed from Simon Waters's translucent score. It is a tough dance with initial trios broken asunder into solos, duets and anarchic ensembles that are occasionally mopped up into unisons and finally forced back into trios. Alston displays his mastery of timing in clustering his dancers, constellations that bear tantalising resemblances but which maintain themselves briefly enough for impatient momentum to become the prime force of the piece.

Alston's *Java* is the foil number, originally three settings of The Ink Spots for Second Stride, now nine and overhauled. To match the song's era, Jenny Henry has dressed the cast beautifully in black trousers and a variety of white and sparkling jackets and waistcoats and, for the final duet, Diane Walker, like a heroine, in full skirt and high heels. Meticulously and wickedly, Alston includes references to social, display and theatre dancing, but confines these within his own rich idiom, so that *Java* is too skilful to be mere parody and too serious to be camp. Like Astaire, whose shade feels close, *Java* is lightness and immediacy transformed into high art. □

FILMS

Unpicking the wedlock

John Coleman

My First Wife (15)
Lumiere; Chelsea Cinema
Pandora and the Flying Dutchman (PG)
ICA
Girls Just Want To Have Fun (PG)
Dominion; ABCs, Bayswater, Fulham and Edgware Road

IT WAS THE AUTHENTIC eccentricity, coupled with artistic exoticism, of his *Man of Flowers* that brought the Dutch-born director Paul Cox to our attention only last year: this was, after all, a pretty singular film to come out of Australia, the country of his adoption since 1965, proposing as it did a middle-aged bachelor of refinement and bizarre tastes, a far cry from the usual wizards of Oz, as central figure. This Charles, among other curiosities, persuaded a model to strip for him weekly to an aria from *Lucia di Lammermoor*. That the movie was shot by the emigré Soviet cameraman Yuri Sokol probably added to its piquant otherness.

At any rate, its success prompted the subsequent exhibition of Cox's immediately previous feature, also shot by Sokol, the less ambiguous *Lonely Hearts* — and, to keep the canon straight, there had been two or three more features and some dozen shorts and documentaries preceding all this.

And so Cox's latest film, **My First Wife**, with its semi-autobiographical pulsations, can hardly be said to spring from a newly tapped talent of relative inexperience. (Experience of relatives, incidentally, is one of its prime strengths.) This tale of a badly creaking marriage shows clear affinities — sometimes to its detriment — with past practices, being most

Passion floored in *My First Wife*

forceful in fact where a sort of documentary openness prevails. John (convincing John Hargreaves) announces classical music for a Melbourne radio station; his wife Helen, powerfully played by splendid Wendy Hughes, teaches English part-time to new Australians and is having an affair with a mutual friend Tom; this handsome, reasonably affluent couple, with a small daughter and a shared passion for good music (their house is hung with framed composers), has reached breaking-point, at least on Helen's side. To add to the familial tensions, John's Russian-immigrant father is dying.

In a cruel, mysterious opening series of cross-cuts, that marital house is dimly prowled while a passage from Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* resounds ironically; John's at the radio station; two bodies are making love back at the house; John quotes to his audience from Gluck, to the effect that music may be at the service of the plot (and certainly our ears are to be gratified throughout with not merely recurrent *Orpheus* but Orff, Haydn and *morceaux choisis*). This is bravura cinema, shorn clinically down to later sighs of disbelief, then rage, as smug John — priding himself on being 'observant' (the word magnificently triggers Helen's confession of infidelity) — lies beside his wife, learning the truth, muttering, 'Oh . . . oh, dear,' comically inadequate in his first reaction, very humanly so.

Mr Cox has the merciful gift of deflations and they arguably save what follows — nothing less than birth (recalled), copulation and death — for our maintained interest: Helen's departure with little Lucy, John's attempted suicide, his father's funeral, after which husband and wife wander off, wee daughter in between, the man intoning, 'We should take more care of how we say goodbye,' towards Cox knows what accommodations.

That John, in his indifference, deserves everything he gets is something the film is not

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Birdy Eloquent images, inspired technique, skin-tight performances give brave lift-off to allegory-flecked adventures in blue-collar Philly of ornithological obsessive (Matthew Modine) and butch buddy (Nicolas Cage), later traumatised by Vietnam. Alan Parker's most sympathetic venture since *Bugsy*.

The Purple Rose of Cairo Woody Allen's brilliantly faceted, sad-funny fantasy, as relevant to our depressed Eighties as its Depression Thirties. Actor in idiot movie descends from New Jersey screen briefly to woo movie-mad, downtrodden housewife, making chaos and whoopee. (Mia Farrow, Jeff Daniels).

Witness Australian director Peter Weir in fine-tuned control of offbeat US thriller. Rugged but honest city policeman (Harrison Ford), grudgingly harboured from bent colleagues by time-warp Amish farmers, shares unconsummated love with Kelly McGillis's superb widow until the inevitable, estranging shoot-out.

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always aware of, but the wild and tender encounters, comforts and outrageous reversals (all his friends seem — as in life — to have known about Helen) which come his woebegone way contain enough hard-eyed reality and saving humour to offset the worst of this. Once again Yuri Sokol is director of photography and what influence he has on Paul Cox must be debatable: hard not to feel he goes enthusiastically along with some arty matter of trains-as-motif, vaguely surreal memory-images, bits of optical tricksiness that one viewer found irritating. And yet the same man gives us a marvellous two-shot, sustained, of the pair facing us as they verbally war in bed; a crafted, zany scene at Helen's bewildered parents' place; close-up after close-up revealing just what excellent actors Wendy Hughes and John Hargreaves are. And, most finely, there is the continuing sense of Australia as a new-found land.

'He did not bark his orders. He was a cool führer. Unfortunately for him he was also a deaf führer.' Thus James Mason, writing in his autobiography, about Albert Lewin, onlie

. . . passion flawed in *Pandora*

begetter (producer, director, writer) of the 1950 **Pandora and the Flying Dutchman,** currently revived in what we are assured is a brand-new Technicolor 35mm print. The ICA, offering it as part of their championship of 'visual cinema' (*vide* Raul Ruiz — and beware), promised that the erratically lit and tinted copy we saw the other day would be improved for your delectation: let's hope so. This supreme folly, set back in a 1930 Spanish coastal colony of mainly Brit expatriates, is famous for Jack Cardiff's photography of everything weird and wonderful, including ravishing Ava Gardner, screen-fillingly melting-eyed, as glam chantoozy and heart-breaker Pandora. Mason is the legendary Dutchman ('My mind was a hive of swarming gadflies'), who cites 'Dover Beach' to Ava ('I know that pome — it's an English pome'). Nigel Patrick racing-drives to a world record; a jealous bullfighter gets gored; art, history, prose, etc. suffer fates worse than death. That's 'visual' cinema for you.

Girls Just Want To Have Fun, for all its title, lets the boys into a frenetic disco-dance jamboree for adolescents of all ages. Directed by rock-video maestro Alan Metter, the piece surprised me by its amiability, even its silly humour, written by Amy Spies. □

THEATRE

Human bondage

Benedict Nightingale

The War Trilogy
EDWARD BOND *Pit*

ON THE COVER of the new *Plays and Players* there's a photo of a middle-aged man, pink and frowning, lips as thin as the rims of the specs behind which ice-blue eyes accusingly glower. It's a face that has felt pain but moved beyond it, a grim and unforgiving face, the sort you might imagine on a revolutionary tribunal of the future, sentencing its class-enemies to re-education in the paddy fields. It's the face of Edward Bond in 1985: a playwright convinced that our society is so obscenely unjust, our planet so close to auto-destruction, that kindness is cruelty, cruelty kindness and averagely draconian solutions by no means draconian enough.

That presumably explains how, in his *Bundle*, he could show his hero hurling an abandoned child into a river rather than allowing its needs to distract him from his revolutionary duties. That explains how (*The Worlds* this time) he could justify not just terrorism, but a terrorism pretty indiscriminate in its choice of victims, as a means of ensuring that justice prevails in an industrial dispute. And that explains the injunction someone lets drop in his new *War Trilogy*: 'the rich man gives a meal to the poor man's son; take the rich man's son and don't return him to his father until the poor man's son is fed every day.' If this political programme isn't to your liking, as it certainly isn't to mine, at least let's agree there's logic to it and not (I'd prefer to think) the armchair logic of a passionless ideologue. What the Bond of the best of the *War Trilogy* has in common with the Bond of *Saved* and *The Fool* is exceptional sensitivity to suffering, combined with exceptional horror at its causes. In his time he's looked where other people don't, faced what they won't, felt what they can't. He has implicitly convicted the rest of us of a culpable thickness of skin, an almost criminal hardness of heart. That's his value, that's what has made him an authentically challenging playwright.

But one can concede this without consenting to his analysis of society in every particular, still less endorsing a response to its evils which itself involves considerable skin-thickening and heart-hardening. Are our Western democracies as utterly bogus, as irretrievably wicked, as Bond believes? One can't help noticing how often he has turned to far-off times and climes for metaphors for today's iniquities. In *The Bundle*, for instance, he surreptitiously invited us to make violent revolution in modern Britain on the basis of extreme instances of exploitation, oppression and poverty in pre-industrial Japan. Indeed, *The Worlds* in 1979 was his first play with a contemporary setting since *Saved* in 1965, and a weird blend of farce and sentimentality, caricature and sententiousness it was. Is the *War Trilogy*, occurring as it does in the years immediately before and after nuclear catastrophe, a more plausible picture of the century and society we've constructed — or has Bond spun analogues from the future as tendentious as some he's found in the past?

Well, it's not always easy to acquit him of exemplary exaggeration. The first play, *Red Black and Ignorant*, describes the life that would have been lived by a victim of the H-bomb had it *not* fallen. Schooling would have been institutionalised idiocy, marriage warfare, the job-market a murderous jungle and parenthood would have meant first selling his child to the state, then seeing him forced by unemployment into the army. Once there, the boy would have been required to go home and shoot civilians, thereby relieving the pressure on a government keener to spend money on rockets than food. This last idea has evidently been rattling rather obsessively round Bond's mind recently, because he revives it in still nastier form in the final play, *Great Peace*. Here, squaddies are given a holiday from their regular posts in the killing fields, but must pay for it by finding and murdering an infant. In the protagonist's case, that means smothering his baby brother.

Moral cannibals we may in some ways be: our mutual eating habits have some way to go before they become as obviously ugly as that. It's self-indulgent of Bond to suggest otherwise, because it permits audiences to shrug off all his prophecies with snorts of 'absurd'. Yet it would be equally self-indulgent of those audiences if they did so, because they'd be ignoring *aperçus*, arguments under the sensational rhetoric, which deserve attention. The *War Trilogy* is not, after all, just saying that our society is grotesquely unjust, our world dangerously near annihilation. It's putting those propositions together. It's saying that we're becoming moral mutants, squandering resources that could feed, educate and change an unjust world on weapons that protect, perpetuate and worsen injustice, ignorance and hunger. The more the bombs we create the greater the human deprivation and psychic damage, and the greater that deprivation and damage the more the bombs; and this vicious circle is spinning us towards extinction.

This needs amplification, qualification and definition of what's meant by 'justice'; but at least Bond is addressing, and in characteristically bold style, questions strangely neglected by his fellow-dramatists. How will nuclear war come about, what are its after-effects likely to be. Answering them, he has produced several scenes of his old vividness and force along with others that, to be frank, expose him for the pontificating windbag he's more recently allowed himself to become. In *Great Peace*, his soldier muddles and botches his way to infanticide, than makes his dumb protest by disobeying an order to pick up a cigarette packet and getting himself shot for his pains; then we follow the variegated fortunes of his mother as she roams the post-nuclear wilderness, cradling the filthy blanket she pretends is her baby; and Bond often shows he's still able to grip, move and astonish. Yet in the other plays his curt, cutting idiom intermittently vanishes and people start reflecting, opining, telling us what to think, sometimes ponderously, sometimes in pseudo-

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lyrical style, sometimes both. The less 'poetically' Bond writes, the more genuinely poetic he usually manages to be; and also, one fears, vice versa. But let me add that either way Nick Hamm's cast, ably led by Ian McDiarmid and (especially) Maggie Steed, maximise what's plausible in Bond's futurism, minimise what's pretentious and preposterous.

Actually, the evening might be summed up as a bizarre mix of the plausible and preposterous. It contains examples of open and observant Bond and blinkered and dogmatic Bond, sensitive Bond and paranoid Bond, compassionate Bond and baleful Bond, realistic and trenchant Bond — and when we leave him, a wishful and romantic Bond. At the end of the second play, *Tin Can People*, post-nuclear squatters recover from collective psychosis, rejecting the leavings of the old, bad world for a proud new self-sufficiency; at the end of *Great Peace*, a community emerges that has progressed still further, and throws candlelit suppers to prove it. Is Bond's last word on the Bomb that it may give survivors the chance to create the just democracy that has always eluded them? That doesn't seem much comfort, and isn't easy to believe either. Would human evil, as so savagely evoked by Bond himself, really disappear with social alienation? Given the beastliness of the messages he's shown us scrawling on our ontological slates, would we do so much better if we were magically presented with clean ones? □

MUSIC

Dried flowers

Andrew Clements

Roger Sessions: When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd
Elliott Carter: Penthode
Albert Hall/Radio 3

I REALLY TRIED hard with what last week's *Listener* told me was Roger Sessions's masterpiece. Sessions died earlier this year at 88, one of the most respected figures in American music, a teacher and composer of great distinction. In Britain his music has never been widely played; perhaps it lacks both the approachability of Copland and the fashionable intellectual rigour of Carter. Some of his nine symphonies make occasional appearances; those that I have heard seemed earnest, densely worked scores, whose orchestration was more functional than inventive, hard going for those looking for instant rewards. Of his large-scale opera *Montezuma* and a decent body of chamber music very little has crossed the Atlantic. **When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd** has taken 15 years to do so; last week's Proms performance by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus under John Pritchard was the cantata's European première.

Sessions set Walt Whitman's magnificent poem in 1970, dedicating it to the memory of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Whitman wrote in response to the news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln; in 1946 Hindemith used the same text for a memorial to Franklin Roosevelt. Sessions fashioned it into a big-boned cantata, three movements each concentrating on a different aspect of the poem — the image of spring with which it opens, Lincoln 'the great star disappear'd' and, finally, a reconciliation with death through the song of the hermit thrush, 'death's outlet song'. It is a marvellously stimulating poem for any composer, full of resonances and changes of pace and mood which cry out for musical treatment, and containing its own apotheosis in the hymnic 'Come lovely and soothing death' which offers a genuine transcendence.

There is nothing to fault in Sessions's apportioning of the text between the chorus and his soprano and bass soloists, nothing either in his vocal lines that is not perfectly singable. Yet after three hearings the work continues to leave me absolutely chill and vaguely incredulous that any talented composer could manage so comprehensively to drain the passion and much of the beauty out of Whitman's lines. I cannot even now recall a single idea that struck me as appropriate or in any way imaginative. So much of the orchestral writing is drily rhetorical, punctuating the voices almost arbitrarily; the melodies too seem to strive for a sublimity they never quite attain. It is as if Sessions, confronted by a poem of such palpable musical quality, deliberately underplayed his own contribution because he feared producing something too emotionally charged, too highly coloured.

I wondered briefly whether the performance was the problem. Certainly it was not a particularly vivid account; the natural rhythms of the lines did not flow as seamlessly as they might, the orchestral interjections sometimes were made unnecessarily bald. But the real problem, I fear, lies in the music itself: it fails to come alive, and whatever life and lyricism it has are buried too deeply.

American music is the main theme of this Proms season, and only four nights after the Sessions Boulez and the Ensemble Intercontemporain arrived for a programme that, alongside Höller, Berio and Boulez himself, included the first performance of a substantial commission from Elliott Carter. **Penthode** plays for 18 minutes, in a single, marvellously seamless whole, and, using the 20 instrumentalists of the Ensemble, is one of the most complex musical structures even Carter has ever contemplated. His last major score, *Triple Duo*, divided the six players of the Fires of London into three duos and set them in opposition; in *Penthode* there are five groups of four, each with its own material and intervals, its own tempi and moods.

Carter manages these multi-layered constructions so masterfully these days that we almost take for granted the skill with which he puts the whole mechanism together. Here there is eloquent control of the total density of the music, of the use of instruments alone (the work opens with a generously lyrical viola solo) against dense tuttis, of the co-ordination of different tempi to produce beautifully poised moments of repose. The whole thing is so magnificently crafted one almost overlooks its sheer intellectual density; Carter's strict schooling under Nadia Boulanger 50 years ago remains as valuable as ever. □

TELEVISION

Andrew Rissik

Word perfect

THE ACHIEVEMENT of Harold Pinter is an achievement of dramatic language. As a maker of dialogue, as a wary chronicler of the loaded emotional detail of conversation, he has yet to be bested. And, if we are often unconvinced by the creaky melodrama of his plots, we are held nevertheless by the dangerous poetic accuracy of his phrase. I don't think he has ever given us a fully-rounded human being — his characters have names but are really mere types — and his drama has little in common with the psychological realism we associate with Chekhov, Ibsen and Rattigan. But Pinter can pull relationships into stylised and hypnotic patterns with uncanny precision and a remarkable dramatic eloquence. If, in an age of naturalism, there can really be such a thing as a conversational poet, this is what Pinter is. He has learnt from Beckett the spare power of formal design and his gift to succeeding dramatists is the ability to reveal in the mundane surface of dialogue the enormous emotional dimensions that lie beneath. His drama is most moving when, verbally, it is at its most banal.

BBC2's Summer Season has, last week, given us two, relatively short Pinter plays, **The Dumb Waiter** and **One For The Road**, both directed in the studio with moody visual elegance by Kenneth Ives. Ives first came to my attention when he directed Wally K. Daly's *Butterflies Don't Count* for *Play For Today* some years ago, and he has brought the same painterly sense of light and colour, and the same keen textual intelligence, to these two plays. *The Dumb Waiter* is a relatively early Pinter piece, and it's little more than an adroit and amusing existential revue sketch. A middle-aged crook called Ben sits, sweating and impatient, in an airless London basement with a younger and less experienced sidekick called Gus. Whiling away the time in uneasy camaraderie, the two indulge in various conversational sallies and aggressions, discovering, incredibly, that they appear to be in an empty kitchen with a restaurant upstairs sending down increasingly idiotic requests for food.

This Absurdist jest is the play's primary gimmick and, dated now, it seems forced and tedious. But there is a real, exasperated vitality in the dialogue and, played with belligerent peevishness by Colin Blakely and Kenneth Cranham, it demonstrates expertly Pinter's sense that it is the defensive strategy of idle conversation which insulates so many of us from a larger comprehension of the world. *One For The Road* is a far more mature and far more dangerous and persuasive piece of work. First given last year at the Lyric, Hammersmith, with Alan Bates in the lead, it has been revived since at the Duchess Theatre where Kenneth Ives directed Colin Blakely.

It is the apotheosis of Pinter's technique.

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There is no action — although the offstage implications are horrible — and the play is simply a series of terse confrontations between an urbane interrogator of sadistic verbal dexterity and the three members of a family — father, mother, seven-year-old boy — who are at his casual mercy. Pinter is famous for the barbed danger of his dialogue and, in this play, he takes the form to its extreme and reveals in it a naked, sexual force. The achievement of *One For The Road* is its stench of pornography, its exposure of the erotic satisfaction inherent in this teasing exercise of absolute power. Although I preferred Colin Blakely in the part — he was a drab plainclothes policeman going through his tricks with brooding self-satisfaction — in this production Alan Bates gave the role the room-prowling poise of a psychopath and the clipped, ominously quiet diction of a mad headmaster. Ives directed both pieces with admirable rhythmic sense and sombre visual style. What he proved is that, in the right hands, the compromise of studio production can have its own texture, beauty and precision.

The subject of **Reputations** (BBC2) — a timely repeat — was the late Kenneth Tynan. This was a straightforward, sane-minded homage, presented by Anthony Howard and featuring interviews with Jonathan Miller, John Osborne, Harold Hobson, Tony Richardson and others whose reminiscence was material. Tynan emerged from it as a sympathetic though unattractive literary exhibitionist, proudly proclaiming truths which no one had ever denied — Miller painted a sly picture of Tynan's evangelical naivety about sex — and indefatigably star-struck.

Tynan's gift was the gift of matchless description. He wrote passionate, glittering prose in which he captured, indelibly, the moment-to-moment excitement of theatrical performance. He was a master enthusiast and a vivid chronicler and no one since has written with half his verve and fire about the heart-catching immediacy of great acting. His reviews were often scandalously funny and, to one who had not seen the performances about which he wrote, thrillingly evocative. But Osborne later described him, in a memorable put-down, as 'an intellectual spiv' and, although he didn't press the case in this programme, I do know what he meant.

Tynan was intellectually second-rate and his dramatic thinking was often glib and meretricious. In a way, he was lucky, since the period in which he wrote offered him relatively little new drama. His collected criticism is, in the main, a fervent endorsement of the classics. Often banal when discussing new plays, he was never much able to account for their content or the validity of their technique. At heart, he was greatly impressed by melodrama and rhetoric — particularly when, in Brecht's case, they came in a dissonant modernist disguise. And it is to him that we owe the dubious critical legacy that performance, immediacy, impact, is the thing. We should remember that he wrote off much of Rattigan, sneered at *Krapp's Last Tape*, was superficial about Pinter, thought the florid poetry of Rostand's *Cyrano* superior to Shakespeare's and fell completely for the trite posturing of *Look Back In Anger*. □

Christine Roche

A way with walkers

Nina Hibbin

WE DIDN'T REALISE, when we bought our away-from-it-all cottage, high up on a wild and windy cliff, that the Cleveland Way ran past the door. We only knew that it overlooked a magnificently rugged coastline, that the patch of land at the back was big enough for a survival garden — and that it was incredibly cheap.

Once we'd moved in permanently and got used to filling walkers' water-flasks and pointing out the way, the next step seemed obvious enough to be inevitable. Several planning-applications-in-triplicate later we put a sign in the window: WALKERS' HALT. MUGS OF TEA OR COFFEE. WE DON'T MIND MUDDY BOOTS. We were in business.

Nobody passed by for a week or so. Then one day the dog began barking and suddenly our tiny, low-beamed living-room, with its scrubbed wooden table and clutter of travel mementoes and junk-shop finds, was bursting at the seams with a dozen strapping lads and lasses and their rucksacks, binoculars and cameras. We retreated into the kitchen to muffle our giggles. It seemed such a bizarre invasion at the time.

Six years later, dispensing tea to walkers, seeing to their blisters and spin-drying their socks has become an integral part of our life-style — a way of living in isolation yet seldom without company; a permanent excuse for not getting to grips with the empty sheet in the typewriter and, on fine days, when the walkers sit outside, for sitting alongside them and simply drinking in the view.

Weighty problems are solved around the tea-mugs — problems of world peace and politics, of the high unemployment which is devastating our area; of coping with parents or with teenagers; with exams or diets or divorce. During the strike, two miners stopped for tea and rather sheepishly confessed that they were still working. Soon after they'd left three striking miners came in. The coincidence was too good to waste. I urged them to drink up quickly and catch the first ones up to continue the argument I'd started with them. We don't know whether they managed it. All our stories are pleasurably open-ended.

What people most of all want to talk about, of course, is the walk itself — especially the loners, who have been storing everything up in their heads. They tell us about the exhilarating climb from Helmsley to Sutton Bank; about the hard up-and-down slog northwards across the moors from Osmotherly to Kildale, rewarded by spectacular views from the heights; about their dry disappointment at finding no pub at Kildale; about the animals and birds they have spotted and the proliferation of wild flowers once they reach Saltburn and are on the coastal stretch southwards towards Filey.

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In return, we show them how every nearby hillock and escarpment, now overgrown with heather and bracken, has been shaped by harsh labour over three centuries — first the alum-quarriers, then the ironstone miners; railway workers, too.

For encore, we tell them about the ships that, according to the records, used to sail from London, laden with human urine to supplement the local supply — a vital ingredient for the long-drawn-out alum-production process that was carried out on the clifftop.

Most of the backpackers start the 100-mile walk on a Saturday. They arrive in dribs and drabs. The tough fitness freaks, racing against the display on their 15-function digital watches, reach us on Mondays. On Tuesdays we get the cheerfully efficient ones, pacing themselves out with time to enjoy the scenery and a leisurely snack.

The Wednesday and Thursday people are the matiest — the stragglers, who make camp when they feel like it, get tempted into attractive detours and lose their woolly hats as they scramble up the cliffside to retrieve the path.

There is no particular day for the masochists. Feet lacerated, shoulders chaffed, intolerable pains at the back of their knees, they soldier on regardless.

'I loathe walking,' one of them told me, 'I only do it to raise money for charity. I don't need all this gear, but I don't feel I'm doing my bit unless I'm loaded down.' He asked me to fill his flask with cold tea. Why cold tea? 'Because I hate it, so I'm not tempted to keep stopping for a drink.'

There's no special day for the sexist, either. Typically he's half of a middle-aged couple. He does all the talking. He praises my cooking and won't believe it's my husband who bakes the cakes and does the washing-up. He would have arrived here yesterday, he boasts, but 'she' slowed him down. He talks in the first person: 'I started out on Saturday'; 'I stayed at the youth hostel last night'. 'Where did *you* stay last night, then?' I usually ask the woman. She grins. She knows what I mean. And it often turns out that he, not she, is the one with the sore feet. I can be quite rough, when I choose, with my first-aid technique.

'Is that your husband's library?' a lone male walker asked me, spotting the bookshelves in our sitting-room, through the connecting door. 'Why? D'you think I can't read?' I asked. 'No,' he said, 'but it's usually the man who has the books.' Argument flared. But you can't beat that level of prejudice with words.

I brought out my scissors and plasters and began cauterising a needle. 'Shall I see to your blisters now?' I asked. □

Among this week's contributors:

Fred Halliday is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics.

Mervyn Jones's most recent novel is *Joanna's Luck*, published by Piatkus earlier this year.

Andrew Lownie is Books Editor of *House Magazine*, the weekly journal of Parliament.

Naseem Khan
So many voices

'COME to Tring,' said the note. 'Apart from their stage show, Grand Union will be doing all kinds of other things in their own marquee.' Now that's the kind of wide-ranging invitation that I really like. And what pleasanter prospect than a day out at the International Jazz Festival (banished this year from its usual venue, Bracknell) at Pendley Manor, Tring.

It was idyllic in Hertfordshire that day. Hay drying in neighbouring fields, bright splashes of poppies, light summer air. And though the manor itself — out of bounds anyway — is decidedly phoney, in such a setting, on such a day who cares? The atmosphere at midday, when Grand Union start setting up in the huge marquee pitched just beside the manor, is gentle and relaxed. Indeed at first, on this slow sunny Saturday, there seems some danger that Grand Union Orchestra — a large group — will outnumber the people in the tent. But this is an illusory audience. For, in the way of festivals, all the site is the auditorium. The sound rolls over groupings stretched out on the cropped grass, past the smoking barbecue, way over to the smaller so-called Performance Tent and surprising custom-built theatre hidden away behind a copse.

It's an eclectic, unpredictable, vigorous sound — snatches of salsa and highlife and South American rhythms, winding in and out of mainstream jazz and rock. If you'd been listening outside you might have expected to see a different band on stage each time you looked in, except that there was an overall tone and feel to the music that stamped it as the work of one integral, albeit diverse, group.

And that, in a nutshell, is what Grand Union is about: diversity contained within one musical framework — musical diversity and diversity of people. 'I don't want to see any more bands with just white middle-class men in them any more,' said Tony Haynes who, with John Cumming, formed Grand Union some three years ago. 'It's not good enough any more.' Grand Union is in fact a direct reflection of the multi-racial nature of today's society. More, it is a celebration of it.

The practicalities of such a venture present more problems than one might think. For, though jazz itself has developed through musical fusions, other more deliberate multi-ethnic cooperations — like Indo-Jazz Fusions of the Sixties and Ravi Shankar and Yehudi Menuhin's more recent attempts at a dialogue — have pointed up the problems of mixing sounds. Even setting out on such a task, proffered Haynes, has its moments of terror. For instance, he had greatly admired the music of Sarah Laryea, the Ghanaian drummer and vocalist. Nevertheless, when it came to trying to find a musical relationship, he was scared, nervous of his ability to find a common language to reach across the cultural divide. A difficult process, it doesn't work with everyone. Some musicians have just passed through, unable — the counter-demand — to let their own forms of music be affected and changed by the overall relationship. 'A common idea of music is what makes it work. . .What is important is that they are exceptional people — everyone's musical personalities are very strong — rather than in fact the multi-cultural or multi-ethnic aspect.'

The fusion comes about essentially through Grand Union's private workshops. An example of their working method comes about later that day at Pendley Manor. About 30 people — a variety of ages and professional ability, from curious kids to practising musicians — had volunteered for a workshop. They were gathered on the grass outside the little marquee, where group members quickly sorted them into two sections: percussion and wind. For the next 40 minutes each group worked on a simple bouncy South American marching rhythm, cheerfully insolent brass intermingling with a variety of percussion, from that bane of nursery schools, the simple triangle, to nameless wooden scratchers and shakers. It was an agreeable, friendly, uninhibited activity, but the best of Grand Union was yet to come, with their second set played in the late afternoon: Tony Haynes's long composition, 'The Song of Many Tongues'.

THE BAND'S earlier session had been a demonstration of cultural virtuosity. 'The Song of Many Tongues' put that dexterity to a single purpose, in a vision of one-ness that Haynes's extraordinary musicians put over with enormous ability and drive. The piece itself is based around a series of poems that Haynes has taken from a number of sources, arranged and set in an overall context. The poems themselves are diverse: children's writing, nursery rhymes, African chants, biblical story, a Wolf Biermann ballad about a victim of the Civil Rights movement.

It all starts simply, with an empty stage. One by one the musicians come on, joining in the opening song, so that there is a gradual accumulation both of sound and of people and of colours of people.

The song, written by a child, sets the theme: 'One tree/so many leaves/One tree. . . .One river/so many streams/ One river', building up to the full 15-strong orchestra, 'One world/so many tribes/ so many colours in their skins/ so many tongues/ One people/ One world/ One journey.' The communality and innocence is shattered — Ros Davies reads the story of the building of the Tower of Babel, when the divisions in humanity prove its downfall. Songs and music follow that echo and develop the themes of exile and loss. (The nursery rhyme, 'Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home' in a variety of languages, is used tellingly.)

When the final restatement of unity comes, the packed tent was on its feet and cheering. And the accolade was deservedly given — both to a generous and talented group and to a piece of music that was moving, passionate and versatile. □

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Weekend competition

No 2884 **Set by A. Boteman**

Vituperative verse (up to 12 lines) addressed to any machine in your life, from car to computer, dish-washer to video. By 14 August.

No 2881 **Set by E.O. Parrott**

Definitions of heaven by presentday notables.

Report **By Di Dact**

Most conscientious, Crum M., but perhaps a little overscrupulous. By specifying definitions 'as succinct' as the famous example given, Mr Parrott did not intend that you confine yourself literally to eight words but that you convey, comparatively speaking, as much flavour in a small space, as indeed many of you did. Since more than one pupil came up with 'to witness the eclipse of the *Sun*' as Mr Robert Maxwell's idea of heaven, we shall not reward that one but you (and you know who you are) may feel quite pleased with yourselves. Three pounds per printed definition of what heaven is. . . .

A.N. Wilson
proof-reading the Authorised Version in the arms of Barbara Pym.

Jan Leeming
explaining how Deng Xiao Ping and Mikhail Gorbachev contracted phthisis and psittacosis while meeting at the foot of Klyuchevskaya in the Sredinny Khrebet.

WILL BELLENGER

Clive Sinclair
chips with everything

J. J. MALING

Ronald Reagan
a Big Mac, a *Reader's Digest* and a Nuke-the-Reds video game.

Norman Mailer
Sylvester Stallone's body and Jean-Paul Sartre's brain.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Ken Livingstone
saying what you really believe about Kinnock, believing what you really say about Benn — and never having to say you're tory!

PASCOE POLGLAZE

Enoch Powell
debating God's existence — with God.

ERIC SWAINSON

Nigel Lawson
the power to tax Heavenly Choir productions and backdate VAT on a Christmas number released during an open-air concert (given to shepherds on a hillside).

CATHERINE BENSON

David Attenborough
wallowing through putrid hippo droppings in search of a never-before-filmed venomous slug.

N. J. WARBURTON

John McEnroe
umpiring those who umpired him.

MONICA G. RIBON

Neil Kinnock
sitting in No 10 watching David Owen on the box explaining that the Alliance did not *really* lose the election.

MARGARET ROGERS

Leon Brittan
replacing St Peter at the Pearly Gates in order to tighten up the regulations governing entry.

RUSSELL LUCAS

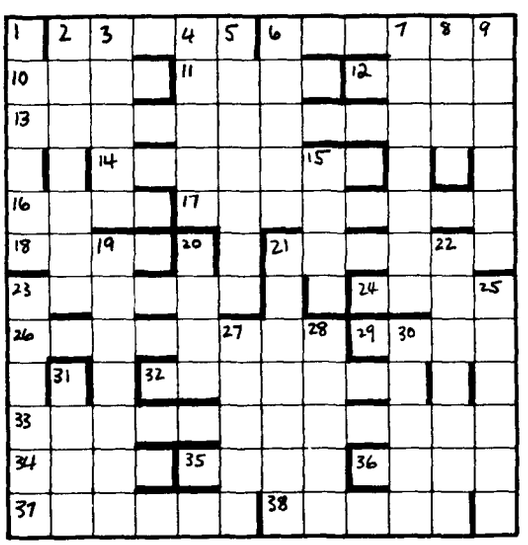
David Owen
the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, with David Steele to keep them constantly clean.

KEN RUDGE

Salamanca 97

'Ratitae'

PRIZES: £25 cheques for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 97, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 3 September.



Twelve special clues lead to 'answers' which may for the purposes of the puzzle be considered as members of the same family and should be treated obviously as such.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

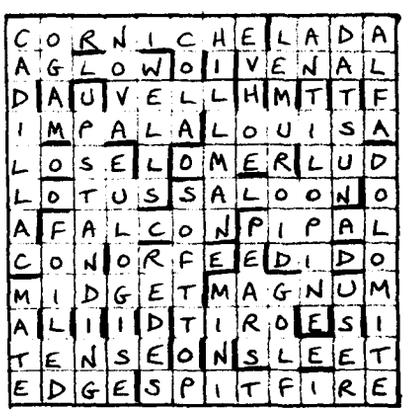
ACROSS

2 They make bird calls around edge of tules (5)
6 Do not identify a tyrant (6)
10 Look to one to make Scots calm (4)
11 Check answer once (4)
12 Black something that can't be properly identified once used by alchemists (4)
13 Possible discourses of old consisting of intense matters one has left undone (12)
14 Captain wanting fish for breakfast? (7)
16 Bird, see, given to make a disturbance? (4)
17 Scott's low collar (possessing a bent air perhaps) lacking a spike (8)
18 Power within reach, carried at the waist in the US? (4)
21 Serenade, disturbing nights (not necessarily hot) with sign of love? (2 words, 6)
23 No good-looking girl, somewhat advanced in years (6)
24 Part where walker begins to cross (4)
26 Game not played much now in which pair'll have spell with a bat (8)
29 Fence round by back ends of pasture (4)
32 In Lawrence's final view you'd see this uninterrupted, and hare beg (sitting up) (7)
33 Leaves (when splitting a pair might unfold) (12)
34 What Mac may grow and water perhaps at end of garden (back) (4)
35 Increases speed suddenly and gets gravitational forces surrounding one? (4)
36 One's purse, made of calfskin, not lank (4)
37 Get the better of with no extraordinary achievement (6)
38 Break a code without pain or doubt (5)

DOWN

1 Wood, not a brownish colour (6)
2 One breaking in bucking bronco that's spirited (2 words, 7)
3 Excel at garden party? (5)
4 Rests on a support (5)
5 Chinese bird flying off (7)
6 Could be he'd find a location after unsuccessful tries (5)
7 Annoying old company's deserted (7)
8 You can see them at the end and bottoms of most ponds (4)
9 Dance, square one two perform, going round? (6)
15 This bird you may see with wings fly feebly (4)
19 Children will sport happily sent into this ————————? (7)
20 Gun belt containing wherewithal to kill once (4)
21 Inn or gable structure? Not so (7)
22 Dance movement, wooden without being folkloric? (7)
23 Military forces don't draw attention to mistakes by saying this (6)
25 Forestry officer lacking hot emotion (6)
27 Put an alternative view and urge one to reconsider (5)
28 Dance movement of some length when used at old court mostly (5)
30 Dry times headed 'fine' (5)
31 Plant attached to bottom of bilge: Hull's got an awkward one attached, you might say? (4)

Solution to Salamanca 96



Prizewinners to Salamanca 96

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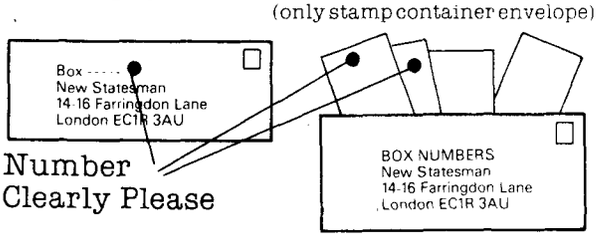

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Theatre

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252
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BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629
Tonight & tomorrow 7.30pm **CROYDON DANCE THEATRE** in **THE BLUEBIRD**. 12-24 Aug. (Mon-Sat) 8pm HARVEY & THE WALLBANGERS in LIKE MEN POSSESSED.

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY 01-628 8795/638 8891 24hr info 628 2295
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LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST to 8 August, returns 17-21 August.
RED NOSES by Peter Barnes 'superb new comedy' Gdn, 'Be there before it's booked out' C Limits — 9-12 August, final perfs 31 August-3 Sept.
THE PIT
THE WAR PLAYS by Edward Bond 13, 14 August.

HALF MOON THEATRE 213 Mile End Rd E1. 01-790 4000. Mons-Sats 8 p.m. till 10 Aug. David Edgar's award winning play 'DESTINY'.

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MIGMARS, Gabriel Rosenstock's latest collection of poems in **IRISH** with prose translations into **ENGLISH**. £2.50 from Ababuna, 1 Corbawn Lawn, Shankhill, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

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ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN divorcee, slim, blonde, early forties, artistically inclined, seeks compatible friend, of similar age, with zest for life. Resident in Home Counties. Box (31)1258.

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ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL lady, 43, interests arts, travel, seeks professional man with similar interests and sense of humour, 40-50. Photo appreciated. Surrey/Hants. Box (31)1249.

BENGALEE HINDU bachelor (never married) early forties, well-preserved, young at heart, academic with diverse interests, wishes to correspond with *younger unmarried* homely sincere woman — view marriage. No divorcee or from medical, nursing, legal profession. Write to P.O. Box 7042 North, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 5J5, Canada.

CAMBRIDGE: LAURA needs a Mike. Female (44), unusual, untidy, independent but lonely, seeks fine romance. Box (31)1257.

DATELINE'S PSYCHOLOGICALLY accurate introductions lead to pleasant friendships, spontaneous affairs and firm, lasting relationships including marriage. All ages, all areas. Free details: Dateline Computer Dating, Dept. (7NS), 23 Abingdon Rd, London W8. Tel. 01 938 1011.

DIVORCEE: QUAKER Universalist, forties, tall, teenage children, interested: home-life, people, countryside, music, books, seeks similar older caring companion, share life's pleasures. East Midlands. Photo please. Box (31)1248.

FRENCH LADY, dual nationality, widow, attractive, young-looking mid fifties, 5' 6", member of National Trust, non-smoker, affectionate. Likes: country walks, cinema, the arts, *good music*. Seeks *reliable*, congenial gentleman, for lasting relationship. Own home NW London. Box (31)1263.

GAY GUY, slim, young 36, graduate, interests include: politics, travel, arts, seeks similar (24-40), for sincere relationship. Photo appreciated. Box (30)1211.

GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL London man, 33, non-smoker, social drinker, sincere, slim, seeks affectionate female anywhere. I am Indian, you need not be. Box (29)1183.

GRADUATE WOMAN, fairly ordinary, gay, mid-forties +, would like to meet similar for outings, companionship etc. Mid-Yorkshire but can travel. Box (30)1214.

HOW WOULD you like to spend summer evenings with a lively, liberated lady, south-Londoner, late forties? Interests include rambling, yoga, co-counselling (and ways of coping with life in general), peace and Third World issues. Box (31)1267.

LONELY, LEISURED amateur pian-accompanist, male, sixties, SW17, wishes to meet woman instrumentalist (cello, violin, flute) or singer, for playing together and friendship. Box (30)1226.

MALE GRADUATE (semi-retired, separated) seeks woman under 50, non-smoker, free daytime, as companion, discussant in *philosophy, psychology, biology: need not be* expert, just deeply interested. Midlands farmhouse; children welcomed. Box (30)1236.

PROFESSIONAL LADY, thoughtful, brown, slim, attractive 42: seeks sensitive, non-smoking, male soul-mate. Sense of humour essential! Interests: music, countryside, home-making etc. Oxford area. Box (31)1246.

PROFESSIONAL MAN, 40s, not keen politician but with many other interests and sense of humour, some family ties, seeks woman who knows her own mind. Box (31)1252.

RAMBLING MAN, 40, redundant, ex-teacher, *restarting*, seeks *interesting, aware*, friendly woman for trip to European National Parks. Yorks/anywhere. Into alternatives, health, optimism, peace. Box (31)1250.

SURELY THERE are some men, 45-55, who would prefer an easy-going, attractive friend/lover, in SE London, with similar experiences of life and shared interests in arts, politics etc., to an immature, pretty young thing? Box (31)1269.

TALL PROFESSIONAL man seeks small/tall, slim/plump, tender/tough lady, 40s who can cope with solvent Gemini, with varied interests and tastes. Box (31)1262.

TEACHER 38, socialist, NUT, 5' 8", kind, humorous, sensitive, drabbie, interested in books, plays, politics, countryside, sociology, (lives in Hackney), seeks warm relationship. Likes children — hates cats! Box (31)1251.

TRIUMPH OF hope over experience: cosmopolitan Cleopatra seeks youthful (over 55), amiable Antony for shared interests, friendship, weekend companionship, joie de vivre. London. Box (31)1270.

UNEMPLOYED MALE, 29, quite ordinary, interested: books, music, cinema, art, conversation, CND, seeks female for friendship, possibly serious relationship. Manchester area. Box (31)1247.

UNSUITED TO a lady of leisure or a beauty that many adore, the one that I could treasure would be untroubled by my 'three score'. Box (31)1271.

VIGOROUS, SENSITIVE male, 48, non-smoker; academic by profession, holist by inclination; seeks female companion with whom to share in play, love, understanding and growth. West Yorkshire. Box (31)1266.

WHY BE LONELY — Rubens type female, mature build, happy personality, offers older male close companionship. Must be genuine, available, caring, no ties. Box (31)1261.

WOMAN, 48, Londoner, seeks friendship with a quiet, gentle, generous and throughtful man, 50s/60s, looking for a committed relationship. Looks immaterial. Box (31)1268.

WORKING/UNDERGRADUATE, African male, 32, looking for a strong, resourceful, tenacious lady, who should be an inspiration that'll help meet the challenge of the future. Age, colour, looks immaterial. West Yorkshire/anywhere. Box (30)1232.

42-YEAR OLD socialist, manufacturers' agent and art dealer, resides West Yorkshire but frequent London visitor, non-smoker, Guardian reader. Interests: music, travel, conversation, driving, sense of humour, seeks similar female, 21-45, for friendship, company, outings, mutual pleasures. Photo appreciated. All letters answered. Box (30)1234.

YOUNG BRIGHTON man seeks lady, 20-28, interested in holiday France, August. Hire bikes, rural France; good food. Must be equable, sense of humour. Box (31)1245.

BOOKS

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LISTINGS

THUR 1 AUG

LONDON Memorial meeting for Comrade Nyati John Pokela, African Freedom Fighter & Chairman of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania 7.30pm Africa Centre, 38 King St, WC2. Speeches, poems, freedom songs. **Organising Cttee. C/O 203 Seven Sisters Rd, N4.**

FRI 2 AUGUST

GREENWICH 'Hiroshima & Nagasaki' — Harvest of Nuclear War' film 8pm St. Mark's, South St. Adm. Free. **Details: Greenwich CND 01-691 4128.**

SAT 3 AUG

LONDON State of Emergency — Action Against Apartheid: Briefing meeting 2.30pm-5pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1. **Org. Anti-Apartheid Movement 01-387 7966.**

TUE 6 AUG

KESWICK 40th Anniversary of Hiroshima at Skiddaw Hotel Conference Rm. 8.15pm Audio-Visual Presentation by Michael Pearson — slides of nature in Lake District set to words & music. *Film 'Life on earth — perhaps'* by Oliver Postgate. 9.15pm Torchlight Procession Central Car Park to Derwentwater via Market Sq. 10pm Floating of Lanterns, dedication at Crow Park by Canon Watson. Lanterns provided. **Org. Cumbrians for Peace.**

CAMDEN Hiroshima Day Ceremony beside Camden's Hiroshima Cherry Tree, Tavistock Sq, WC1. 12-1pm. Speeches & poems. **Org. Hampstead CND, Box no. 34, London, NW5.**

BLACKHEATH Hiroshima Day Children's Peace Picnic 5.30-8.30pm Boating Pond, *nr.* Prince of Wales Pub. Kite flying, making paper 'peace cranes'. 8.30pm Mayors and Council Leaders of Lewisham & Greenwich will float ceremonial candles on pond. **Details: Greenwich CND 01-691 4128.**

WED 7 AUG

STREATHAM 'The Enemy Within' public meeting on Civil Liberties 8.15pm Streatham Library with Nottingham Miners' Wife, Sacked Kent Miner, Greenham Women, Newham 7 Defence Campaign. Adm. Free. **Org. Streatham Action Grp.**

FRI 9 AUG

ISLINGTON International Day of Solidarity with *the women of South Africa* 7pm Islington Town Hall, Upper St, N1. Spkrs & Freedom songs.

SAT 10 AUG

LONDON Requiem for Hiroshima & Nagasaki 11.30am John Baird pub Fortis Green, N10. Dress in black & white, white head bands, carry pennants saying 'No More Hiroshimas'. Procession to beat of single drum round Muswell Hill to gathering at Priory Park commemorative cherry tree 2pm. (see below) **Org. Muswell Hill CND.**

HIGHGATE Gathering to commemorate Hiroshima Day. 2pm Cherry tree in Priory Park, Priory Rd, N8. (close Middle La. entrance) Spkrs. incl. Tim Piggott-Smith. **Org. Highgate CND.**

SUN 11 AUG

CAMBRIDGE Hiroshima & Nagasaki Lantern Floating Commemoration 8.30pm Midsummer Common. Spkrs. incl. Prof. Joseph Needham. **Details: Rosalind Horton for Cambridge CND 0223 313167.**

FORTHCOMING

24-26 AUG AYLESHAM, Kent. Bank Holiday 'Mines not Missiles' Festival '85. **Details: Roger Gates, 28 Harcourt Drive, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8DP. 0227 459676.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

PURSUITS

WOMAN/TEENAGER SON
seek transport sharing expenses.
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Box (31)1254

WRITER touring, camping, South France (beyond?) September, 2-3 weeks, with spare seats, tents, all gear, seeks companions, ideally 2f., 1m. Box (31)1260 or 'phone 06576 612.

PERSONAL

OLD FRIENDS: an introduction agency for the over fifties. Loneliness is not inevitable. Details from: Anne Brent, 18a Highbury New Park, London N5 2DB.

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